

A DAUGHTER OF THE MANSE



MRS. CHARLES TRACY TAYLOR

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A DAUGHTER
OF
THE MANSE

A NOVEL

By

MRS. CHARLES TRACY TAYLOR

Author of "A Story of a Little Poet."

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Illustration by

ALICE BARBER STEPHENS

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To the memory of
my Sister Grace
this book is affectionately dedicated

A DAUGHTER OF THE MANSE

CHAPTER I.

It was a beautiful May morning, the last day in the month, when Frank Whitfield, with a book in his hand, wended his way to a quiet, secluded spot near the edge of the wood, and took possession of a rustic seat that rarely had an occupant. He did not open his book, however, but sat dreamily looking about him, now and then taking deep inhalations of the soft breeze, that came laden with refreshing woodland fragrance.

Directly behind him lay a stretch of fields, with here and there a group of cows grazing peacefully, and beyond ran the main road to the village of Clover Hills, the taller buildings and church-spires of which were plainly seen, silhouetted against the deep blue sky. Directly before him was the wood, the most charming view to be seen from where he sat. The branches of many trees wove a roof above his head and shut out all the glare, and bathed the place in a mellow light. But when a sudden rush of air lifted the cool green arms, and sent them swaying back and forth, turning over the leaves, with their linings of gray and silver, gleams of sunshine shot through, and sent myriads of mov-

ing shadows flitting over the moss-grown earth. Beams of light went scurrying up and down the tree-trunks, and lighted up, for an instant, many half-hidden thickets and shady little nooks under some shelving rocks.

Now and then came the enchanting sound of the wood's great harp, its strings vibrating in soft, far-away notes, as though touched by fairy hands, and the young man would sit trance-like, as if overwhelmed by the beauty of it all.

Just to his left ran a lively little stream, glimpses of which were visible through the trees. Now and then, when its laughter became more joyous, he would turn his head toward it, and watch the sunlight dance on its ripples; then, again, he would sit motionless, as though held by some magic spell, when the note of a bird soaring over his head, or perhaps the hum of a nearby insect, would break the spell, and he would think of his book, and slowly, almost reluctantly, open it, then hesitate, and lift his eyes, and continue gazing on the scene, so beautiful and indescribably peaceful that it seemed to lull all his thoughts, and send them drifting again toward dreamland, whether he would or no.

Suddenly the sound of voices floated to his ear, and he started and grew instantly alert, turning his head in every direction, but not a soul could he see. Then shouts of laughter followed in such a chorus of voices, that he rose to his feet, and, out of curiosity, took a few steps to a fence that divided the woods from the fields.

"A children's picnic," he thought, as a number of young people appeared in full view at the top of a hill, that, to his left, sloped down to the level of the adjoining field.

Having satisfied his curiosity, the young man was about to return to his secluded nook, when he was attracted by a number of the children, ranging in years from ten to fifteen, joining hands and forming a ring around one of their companions, who appeared to be taller and older than the others. The next moment they were dancing about her, singing a lively, catchy air, the words of which sounded to Whitfield, from where he stood, something like this :

"Oh, Evelyn, fair Evelyn,
Of maidens matchless fair,
We've garlands bright of daisies white
To deck thy golden hair.
Sweet Queen of May, thy subjects kneel
And all the clover hills
Are thine to rule—the meadows sweet,
And trees and brooks and rills."

There was a sudden hush, and the dancing ceased, as a girl of ten or twelve entered the ring, carrying a garland of flowers. The May Queen stooped that the child might place it on her head; then she rose, smiling and bowing, while the child took her place in the ring; and again they skipped about the Queen, singing in continuation :

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"Our hearts are true, fair Queen, to you,
And by thy thronéd seat
We'll bring our tribute, flowers rare,
And cast them at thy feet.
We'll sing before thee, gaily dance
In prettiest mazes seen,
To show with springtime joyousness,
Our love for thee, fair Queen."

By this time Whitfield was becoming very much interested, as well as amused, and stood eagerly awaiting the next stage of the performance. He did not wait long, for the instant they ceased singing the May Queen was escorted by several of the largest girls to a nearby bench; then they repeated the song, and, one by one, passed before Her Majesty, laying all sorts of spring blossoms at her feet.

A consultation followed, which undoubtedly met with their Queen's approval, for she nodded in assent to their proposition; and, together with four others, she came forward to the edge of the hill, into plainer view.

Whitfield started in surprise. "The clergyman's daughter, Evelyn Drayton!" he thought. "I had no idea the May Queen was she. I believe she is going to run a race with those four younger girls." From all appearances he was correct. The five placed themselves in a row, at a short distance apart, facing the field below, near which Whitfield was standing.

"It would never do for her to see me," he declared, stepping back into the shadow of the trees,

whence he could see all that was going on at the top of the hill, although screened entirely from view himself.

"Ready!" a voice shouted loud and clear, and the five stood alert, each with a foot forward, swaying back and forth, the May Queen in the center.

"One, two, three!" rang out the same voice, and off they started. The clergyman's daughter was the interesting feature of it all to Whitfield. She was an enigma to him; and to see her now, in this new rôle, was but another of the many surprises that she had given him, in his one year's acquaintance with her.

Down she came, in the lead of them all; and Whitfield declared that he never had seen a prettier picture. He could think of no ballroom beauty, no society belle, who could compare with her. The crown of flowers was still on her head, and like a wood-nymph, she glided, so swift, so agile, that her feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground. There was a separate grace in every motion of her slender but well-rounded figure—a figure, in fact, that appeared to be faultless in symmetry.

Her thick, fluffy hair soon began to loosen, then fell down her back, but she never stopped, nor even slackened her pace for an instant. Her lips were parted, showing the even white teeth, and her whole face was flushed with the excitement of the moment, and radiant with the child-like enjoyment she appeared to take in it all. Whitfield found his nerves growing tense—somehow he felt that the

May Queen must win. Once, when the others gained a little on her, he was seized with a great desire to shout, to spur her on, as he had so often done during a track event at college—in fact, he never remembered being so wrought up over any game on the football gridiron as he was now, in the excitement of this unique race.

“Ah,” he sighed with relief, “the four are lagging back—winded, every one of them. They are panting for dear life; but—by Jove!—look at the May Queen, as fresh as when she started, darting ahead like a deer. Great Scott! isn’t she a picture!”

A few more yards, and the Queen had reached the goal, a large tree near the creek. A perfect din of shouts and hand-clapping came from the onlookers at the top of the hill.

“Bravo! Bravo! called Whitfield, with a spring forward, and waving his hat, forgetting, in his excitement, that he was an uninvited spectator—and a very undesirable one at that. He came to his senses immediately, however, and crouched behind a tree like some guilty culprit, rejoicing that, after all, they had neither seen nor heard him; for not one glanced in his direction, as they made their way across the field again, and up the hill to the picnic grounds. He peeped to see whether there would be a second race, but they all moved back into a grove of trees, until they were out of sight and hearing.

He then made another attempt to settle himself for a few quiet moments with his book, but soon

discovered that it was even more difficult than before to concentrate his mind on its pages. Ever and anon his eyes would wander in the direction of the hill-top, in the hope of seeing once again the beautiful vision of the crowned Queen of the May. After a half-hour had passed without this hope being realized, he arose and turned his footsteps homeward by the way of the creek.

In ten minutes he found himself on the grounds of his father's beautiful summer villa, "Idlewild," which extended on one side to the romantic stream. Although his parents had been there for several weeks, Whitfield had joined them only the day before, having been detained in New York on some pressing law business, which necessitated such close application that he did not take the time to run up to Clover Hills even for a night, although it was a ride of only a couple of hours.

Since graduating the year previous, he had been in the office of one of New York's most prominent lawyers, and had displayed such marked ability, that a great deal of work was assigned to him, and he soon discovered that he had but few spare moments. It appeared, however, that he was not physically equal to the extra demands made upon him, and when spring approached, it found his health in such a precarious state, that he was warned by his physician to give up business entirely for a year, or he would not answer for the consequences. He had been given the same warning when he left college, and was advised not to enter the law office,

as had been arranged, for a year at least, for he was then showing signs of a breakdown; but he did not heed the warning.

He had never been ill in his life before, and his own opinion was that his physician was unnecessarily alarmed, insisting that it was nothing but the effects of a little too close application, which would soon wear away. For the first time he realized that he had made a mistake in ignoring this advice, and finally decided that as soon as the special work was finished, on which he had been engaged for several months, he would take a rest of a whole year. He planned to spend the first part of the summer in Clover Hills; and, later on, to join some relatives and friends in London; in all probability, spending the winter with his parents in the south of France. As he strolled leisurely through the grounds toward the house, he came upon his parents, sitting in the flower garden, and described to them the race he had just witnessed on the hill side.

"From all accounts the minister's daughter appears to be quite a favorite," remarked Mrs. Whitfield, a sweet, sad-faced woman, with snow-white hair.

"You are right, Mother," spoke up the son. "So far as I can see, she is adored by every one in the town. I will never forget that picture," he continued, enthusiastically. "It has imprinted itself indelibly upon my memory. By Jove! What would she think if she knew that I had stolen a march on her?" he laughed.

"That you were very rude, to say the least," the elder Whitfield replied.

"Well, now, what could one do, under the circumstances, but use his eyes? They were not given us to close to things beautiful. You wouldn't have me fly out of my hiding-place like a wild man, and shout 'Stop, stop.' Now, Mother, you at least don't blame me!"—assuming the pleading tone and expression of a reproved child, followed by a knowing look toward his father.

"No, I do not," returned the mother, with such decision that the father and son burst into a hearty laugh, which, in turn, brought a response from Mrs. Whitfield, who fully appreciated the situation. It was such an old joke, and yet it never seemed to grow stale to the father and son—this taking of the son's part by the mother, under all circumstances.

"I'm only sorry I did not witness it myself," she continued, when the men subsided. "I know I should have enjoyed it, Frank, especially," she added, with a sidelong glance at her husband, "as you appear to be absolutely captivated, which is something very unusual."

"That's a fact," confirmed the father, with a slap of the newspaper across his knee. "I never saw you so ensnared. Surely there must be some rare charm about the clergyman's daughter," with a wink toward his wife.

At this the young man threw back his head with a prolonged laugh. "You two dear people do so amuse me!" he said. "I am more susceptible to the

charms of the fair sex than you imagine; but, to tell the truth, my interest in this particular young woman is not at all in the way your words imply. I am interested simply because she is unique, so entirely different from the young women with whom I am accustomed to associate. She has a wonderful faculty for adapting herself to circumstances and people. Judging from what I saw this morning, she can find her way, with apparently no trouble whatever, into the heart of a child; she can stand her ground when talking to a scholar, and, at the same time, is capable of adapting herself to the ragman and scissors grinder."

"Then, I am in no danger yet awhile," laughed Mrs. Whitfield.

"None whatever, my dear Mother. You still reign supreme in my heart—the only woman I love."

As he spoke, the young man arose, and offered his arm to his mother, the butler having just then announced luncheon. The mother smiled, and slipped her hand through his arm. She appeared to be weak and frail when on her feet, and walked with a slow step, leaning toward the tall frame of her son, who accommodated his steps to hers and kept her laughing with humorous remarks, all the way to the house.

CHAPTER II.

That evening Whitfield called at the house of his next neighbor, Alfred Scott. The Scotts, like the Whitfields, had recently built a beautiful summer villa at Clover Hills, and for the same reason. The parents of each family had reached an age when fashionable resorts held no attraction, and their natures craved peaceful surroundings. So they selected Clover Hills, with its beautiful scenery, its tree-lined drives, its romantic stream of water, and its vistas of attractive residences extending for miles along the different roads that led to the town.

He found the entire family on the porch, the parents, the two married daughters, who were on a visit with their children, and the two single sons—Robert, aged twenty-eight, and Alfred, two years younger. Whitfield and Alfred had known each other for some years before either family came to Clover Hills, although they had never been intimate friends.

They all sat chatting together for a half hour or so, when they were driven into the house by a storm that had been brewing since sundown. Alfred escorted Whitfield to his den for a friendly chat and smoke. It was a charming little room, furnished in Japanese style, and overlooking the flower garden, and stately old pines beyond, from which the place derived its name—"Pinehurst."

The two young men presented a striking contrast in appearance, as they seated themselves on either side of a curiously inlaid table, although each would have been termed handsome in his own particular style. Alfred Scott, a typical man of the world, was a little above the average height, well proportioned, and with the complexion of a Spaniard, which he inherited from his grandmother, who was a Spanish lady of high rank.

Mr. Scott had taken both his sons into partnership with him, in a prosperous and long-established business; but so far as Alfred was concerned, it was in name only, for he had flatly refused to confine himself to any regular business routine, occupying his office just as it suited his convenience. He was, in spite of this, a gentlemanly fellow, intelligent, and a good talker, and had hosts of friends, as the "hail-fellow-well-met" generally has.

Frank Whitfield was of a type entirely different; six feet in height, splendidly proportioned, with a magnificent head, well poised on a pair of fine shoulders. He looked every day of thirty years, but in reality was not quite twenty-six. His hair was dark brown, with just a slight inclination to wave. His manner was more quiet and more dignified than that of his companion, and his voice was deep, well modulated, and carried a certain charm with it that always gave a keen pleasure to his listeners. His features were large, strong, and well formed, his eyes of dark brown, deep and intelligent, enhanced by a skin that was fair, and, until recently, suffused

with a ruddy glow. At the present time there was very little color in his face; in fact, he was quite pale, and had a careworn look, and a hollowness in his cheeks that indicated some unusual tax upon his system. He had an aristocratic air, which, together with his good taste and neatness in attire, stamped him at once to the keen observer as a gentleman born.

"Well, this is what I call solid comfort, Scott," he said, as he lighted his cigar from a taper his friend held toward him; then settled himself back on a red-cushioned bamboo chair.

The rain was now coming down in torrents, the wind blowing it against the window-panes with the force of a mid-winter gale.

"Oh, yes—it's comfortable and cosy and all that sort of thing at Pinehurst, but imagine a man of my temperament being satisfied with this for a steady diet! Beastly dull, Whitfield, and quite unendurable after a few days of it."

"On the contrary, Scott, I am actually looking forward to my stay here this summer with a great deal of pleasure. I am tired, worn out, and, like the old folks, long for a resting-place where peace and quiet reign. I suppose you will be wending your way up to Newport shortly?"

"Well, I don't know. I am rather undecided as to my plans for the summer;" and Scott looked wistfully after some rings of smoke he had sent chasing after each other. "How do you propose whiling your time away in your quest for lost health?" he

continued, after a pause. "Making a recluse of yourself, I'll be bound. I do not suppose you have any inclination to enter into the social life of the town and give the young ladies of Clover Hills the pleasure of your society?"

"I intend to give social life a wide berth, leaving the female contingent severely alone. The greater part of my time will be spent in the laziest sort of fashion. I intend giving Nature a chance now, and see what she can do for me. By the way, speaking of the young ladies of Clover Hills, don't you think the clergyman's daughter a very interesting little piece of humanity?"

"Interesting! Well, I should say!" Scott exclaimed, leaning over the table with an alertness that indicated more than ordinary interest in the subject presented. "I have not seen her since March—until to-day, when I caught a glimpse of her in the town. She is a girl, Whitfield, that one rarely meets in a lifetime."

"Right you are, Scott! She is a very unusual young woman; her character is an interesting study to me."

"She's got me guessing," Scott laughed, snapping his eyes.

"She attracts us, I suppose, because she is something novel, so different from the society girl of to-day, with whom you and I have been accustomed to associate," said Whitfield. "Her pursuits and her aims are entirely different," he went on, a glimmer of amusement appearing in his eyes as he

thought—"pursuits, for instance, such as the frolic she participated in to-day."

Suddenly his brow knit; he turned squarely around and faced Scott.

"I tell you, Scott, I am weary of the fashionable woman of to-day—the woman who is wholly of the world. I don't know whether it is because I am ill that I am taking a more serious view of life, or why it is, but I have lately been impressed with the thought of the degrading influence that society, as you and I know it, is wielding. What an influence it has in checking the development of all the nobler and finer qualities in one's make-up. Few there are who know what the word 'society' actually signifies in its true sense, when the desire is to seek the companionship of those whose minds are cultivated and stored with a knowledge of things that make it not only a delight, but a profit as well, to have the opportunity of conversing with them."

"On my word, Whitfield, you are in fact growing alarmingly serious," laughed Scott. "I hope there is no danger of your malady's taking the form of melancholia!"

"There is no telling," laughed Whitfield; "I know only this much—that I am beginning to *think*. Pliny says, 'In time of sickness the soul collects itself anew.' The ancient philosopher, Scott, is pretty nearly right."

"Why, man alive, you were always a thinker! If I could use my brains half as much as you do, I

would be writing down thoughts for coming generations to quote—as you have Pliny.”

“Because one is fond of his profession is no evidence that he is a thinker. There are things that I have neglected thinking about all my life, which I now feel should have had my most serious attention.”

“Really, Whitfield, I never met a man born so well off, who possessed so many splendid qualities as you,” Scott said, in deep sincerity, with a look toward his companion that expressed a new interest. “And your taking such a great interest in your profession, under the circumstances, is sufficient evidence alone that you have a mind that must have food.”

“Oh, bosh—no bouquets, please! This is my first attempt at branding society as an evil. I have made no personal attempts in overcoming it; consequently, I suppose, I should not take to the platform as a reformer until I work out a reformation in myself.”

“Begin with me,” Scott laughed. “If you succeed in reforming such a reprobate as I, you could count on me as your prize testimonial.”

“I’ll take you at your word, Scott, and no backing out, remember, when you see the rescue lines thrown out in your direction. Leaving all joking aside, I don’t know why it is you fellows look upon me as such a paragon—perhaps you do not realize that my present state of health is owing to my burning the candle at both ends. Late hours, rich food, dancing, wines, and so on, have been such frequent indulgences, that I am now paying the penalty.

Yes, Scott, I have been laughing in the very face of Providence, and I never realized my danger until this spring, when I found myself on the brink of a total collapse. It is a fact—not until I saw my hand shaking, and felt my knees giving way under me, not until a lethargy pervaded my whole being, did I come to my senses and call a halt. So you see you are laboring under a delusion, and I wish you would try to dispel it. My wings have not even started to take root yet, Scott—and, do you know, I have still two wisdom teeth to cut.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Scott. Then he drew a long face, and leaned over the table on his folded arms as though ready for a combat.

“Say what you will, Whitfield,” he began, “you cannot make me believe that your dissipations are the cause of this breakdown. I know you well enough for that. A very Hercules would go under who used his brain as you do, together with the social demands made upon you. A brain as active as yours requires a certain amount of sleep, and true it is you do keep late hours, and consequently fail to get the required rest; it is the late hours and being hard at work all day that caused the mischief. Now, you see, there is where I have the advantage. I have no brains that I am conscious of; consequently, I can eat, drink, and be merry, and still enjoy the best of health.”

“Don’t be too sure of yourself; I have known even idiots to suffer impairments in health,” Whitfield spoke up in playful repartee.

Scott threw back his head in a sudden roar of laughter.

"But, seriously, Whitfield," he began again, "your dissipations alone never affected your health; they are mild compared with mine and those of many others. And, as I said before, you may say what you please, but I know that you live up to some very high ideals, which certainly places you on a plane above us weaker mortals."

"Pshaw—you are laboring under a delusion, I tell you, in the elevated opinion you seem to have of me. Do you call it living up to high ideals because I have not drunk of the cup of pleasure quite as deeply as some others?"

"Well, yes; to be able to so hold yourself in check, and resist temptations, surely indicates some lofty principles," Scott returned.

"Well, you are mistaken. I resist, because I know to indulge unrestrainedly in such vices would be detrimental to my success in the profession that I intend to follow. No, I am no angel, Scott, I assure you; and if I were bent on pleasure alone, I might be capable of being tempted to drink the cup to the dregs."

"Never!" declared Scott.

Whitfield laughed. "You are certainly doing things up brown in the way of compliments, this evening—which I only regret I do not deserve; but we have wandered far from the subject with which we started—Evelyn Drayton."

"So we have," said Scott, leaning over the table

again with renewed interest. "How would you describe such a type as hers?"

Whitfield puffed away at his cigar in deep contemplation for a moment, the young lady in question looming up before his mental vision in so many different phases that it was a difficult matter to describe a character so complex.

A glint of humor appeared in his eyes when the picture of the May Queen appeared, the winner of the race. He could still see her running down the hill, a very child of Nature, her face aglow with health, and the deep blue eyes sparkling in keen enjoyment of the little frolic.

"I give it up," he finally answered, knocking off some ashes in a receiver that lay on the table. "She is a human conundrum, Scott, too complicated for even a lawyer to solve—"

"If you give it up, I will not even make an attempt at guessing, but we can agree on one point—she is none the less interesting for all that."

"Of course not," spoke up Whitfield. "It is owing to that very fact that she is interesting. Why, every time I see her, she seems to spring a new surprise on me, and keeps me guessing what the next will be."

"I suppose you have discovered what a wonderful knowledge of books she has?"

"Yes, and of many other things. She has had a splendid training, with a constant companion like her father, whose scholarly attainments are well known. She appears so frank and childlike," Whit-

field added reflectively—"and yet, when she is plied by close questions, I have frequently been amazed at her intelligent answers. Yes, Scott, after a year's acquaintance, I fail to describe this unique young woman. She appears to be of a class so exclusive as to consist of but one member—Evelyn Drayton."

CHAPTER III.

"Is it possible that this is one of my old attacks coming on, and so near evening services?" thought the Reverend Spencer Drayton, pressing his side with both hands, where a severe pain had seized him. He sank back in the chair, panting, and nervously waited to see if it would be repeated.

A minute passed, and his breathing became more regular; he began to hope that his fears were groundless, and that, after all, it might have been only indigestion. He rose slowly, and taking a few steps to a table on which was a pitcher of water, he poured out a little and drank it.

He was about to retrace his steps to the chair, when he was seized the second time, the pain much more acute; somehow he stumbled into the chair, pale and trembling, his breath coming in quick, short gasps.

"That settles it; there is no doubt now—it is neuralgia," he decided, "and I will not be able to preach this evening."

For some minutes he sat quite still, with an elbow resting on the arm of the chair and his head bent forward in the palm of his hand. He looked very white and careworn, with sunken cheeks and a heaviness about his eyes; but in spite of these physical defects he was an interesting figure to look upon, as he sat there, broad-shouldered, with a magnificent

head, covered with a profusion of iron-grey hair. There was nothing in the manner or appearance of the Reverend Spencer Drayton that was decidedly clerical, though his whole bearing was that of a scholar. His views were broad, and he entertained a great consideration for all religious denominations. He was liked as much in a social way as he was in the pulpit—in fact, much more so now-a-days, since a severe attack of pneumonia several years previous, had left him with a throat trouble that affected his delivery to a great extent, making it painful to listen to him.

Previous to this attack his health had begun to fail, and, with hopes of recuperating by taking a smaller charge, he gave up the one in Boston he had held for some years, and accepted the call of the church at Clover Hills. Unfortunately he had been there only a short time when pneumonia developed, and his health had never been good since.

His sermons had always been marvelously effective, on account of his great earnestness, the force he threw into them, and from their peculiar power in searching the conscience. Although a man of high scholarly attainments, his aim had always been not to preach over the heads of his congregation, and the lessons that he drew were principally simple ones that related to the common virtues of life, rather than scholarly discourses that could be comprehended only by the educated few.

Although his sermons nowadays were just as ably written, his preaching, of course, lacked the

force, the beauty, the effectiveness that it had previously had; it being necessary to be continually on his guard to keep his voice from going beyond a certain pitch, or he was in danger of becoming so hoarse that he could not be understood at all. The congregation had so far stood by him with a loyalty that was beautiful to see but recently a dissatisfaction was beginning to show itself. The hopes they had entertained of his recovery were fast disappearing, the opinion of the majority being that his condition was an incurable one.

The room in which he sat was his study, as one might readily imagine, surrounded as it was by shelves filled with books, all arranged in order, so that he was able to place his hand instantly on any book that he desired. It was a bright, comfortable room, with a certain air of refinement about it, though its furnishings were very unpretentious.

Just a few minutes after he was seized with the second attack, another came. He waited until the paroxysm had passed, and was about to rise and call someone, when he heard his daughter's voice, and he sank back in the chair and waited.

"Mother and I are going over to the church now, Father," she called. "There are some little matters we desire to attend to before services."

The clergyman was about to reply, when Evelyn stepped into the doorway, all in readiness to start.

"Why, Father!" she exclaimed. "You are not well"—hurrying to his side.

"One of my old attacks of neuralgia, I fear, my

child. I will not be able to preach to-night, and I don't know what can be done but to have someone dismiss the congregation, both the elders being away, as you know,—the only ones who could have taken charge in my place."

"Oh, I am so sorry. But do not distress yourself about the church, Father. I will arrange everything. But I must call mother; she is waiting at the door for me."

In less than a minute the young girl returned with her mother, who had, on the way, hurriedly removed her hat and gloves; and together they arranged the sick man comfortably on the couch, and made haste to apply the usual remedies. All the while Evelyn was vigorously exerting her intellect for a better solution of the dilemma than to dismiss a waiting audience.

"Go now, my daughter; see, you have only five minutes," gasped the clergyman, glancing toward the clock.

"Yes, Father, I am going right away, and I do hope you will be greatly relieved by the time I return. Give yourself no concern about the church in the meantime; we'll arrange matters all right," she added cheerfully.

She started for the door, when suddenly an idea seized her, and she retraced her steps to the couch.

"Father, what do you say to my giving them the little talk I have been preparing for the Christian Endeavor meeting next week?"

"Do you think you could?" he asked, his heavy eyes brightening at the idea.

"I am sure I could manage it somehow, if you are willing," Evelyn returned.

"I think it a splendid idea, and feel confident that it will meet with the full approval of the congregation," said Mrs. Drayton.

"I will do the very best I can; we have no time to argue the matter," and hastily imprinting a kiss on her father's forehead, Evelyn hurried to the door, and across the long portico that extended from her father's study at the back of the house to a door in the rear of the church.

The congregation had assembled, and the members of the choir, in the small gallery directly over the pulpit, were all in their places, except the first soprano, for whom they were anxiously waiting. The organist was already playing the prelude. In one of the front pews sat Evelyn's two sisters, Elinore, aged eighteen, and Dorothy, twelve. Having left the house before their father was taken ill, they were growing anxious at the delay, and also at the non-appearance of their mother and Evelyn.

"There must surely be something the matter," Elinore whispered. "I think we had better return home."

Dorothy nodded in assent, and they were just about to rise, when the door opened under the gallery; but instead of their father, Evelyn appeared—Sister Evelyn, as she was affectionately called by the church people, the title no doubt having origi-

nated with the younger children of the minister's family, who always addressed her, and spoke of her, as Sister Evelyn.

The organ ceased the instant the door opened, and a sudden stillness prevailed. Every eye was turned toward the young girl, who stepped out to the edge of the platform with a freedom of carriage, combined with grace and an inborn air of refinement.

"I regret very much to inform the congregation that my father was taken suddenly ill just a few minutes ago, with an acute attack of neuralgia, and consequently will not be able to preach this evening," she began in a sweet, clear voice. She hesitated, while a slight flush mounted to her cheeks, as she added modestly :

"He has given his consent to my giving you a little lesson I had in mind for the young people, at the Christian Endeavor meeting next week—if the congregation would be willing to hear it."

The pleasure depicted on every face at this announcement left no room for doubt whatever of the congregation's not only being willing, but delighted with the fair young substitute. In fact, if the truth were told, there was not one present who would not have preferred a sermon or talk to them by the clergyman's daughter, than to listen to the clergyman himself, with his labored delivery.

Being assured of their willingness, Evelyn continued :

"The services will go on as usual, with the excep-

tion that I would like Mr. Stewart to offer a prayer now, and Mr. Harris after the reading of the Scriptures."

She nodded toward each of these two members as she spoke; then, stepping back, she stood with bowed head until the prayer was finished, and then left the platform by the rear door and joined the choir.

The first part of the anthem was sung by the entire choir; and when the time came for Evelyn to sing a part alone, she had fully regained her composure, having become somewhat agitated on being brought so suddenly into such prominence, and she sang with her usual fervor and sweetness.

After this, she returned to the platform, read a portion of the Scriptures, then gave out a hymn, which the entire congregation joined in singing. She was just a trifle nervous over the great responsibility she had so suddenly taken upon herself, without a moment's thought or preparation, and her heart began to beat quicker at the prospect of a possible failure, in not being able to carry out the undertaking sufficiently well to interest the people.

But, fortunately, it was not a characteristic of Evelyn Drayton's to be easily daunted when once she undertook to do a thing, and she offered a silent prayer that God would use her feeble efforts in bringing some soul to Him.

There was no such uneasiness in the minds of the people who sat eagerly waiting to hear her, looking forward to it as a great treat; and it would not

require any great penetration for even a stranger to see that Evelyn was adored by the occupants of the pews.

It was not feature nor form that gave the charm to the minister's daughter; the main attraction lay in the charm of her manner, and the buoyant, frank expression. The bright face seemed almost to shine with the glow of health and youth, and reflected a happy heart which, so far, had defied any sorrow or care from warping its marvelous exuberance. But with all her joyousness she could be serious when the occasion demanded, and possessed also an under-current of latent fire and force of which only a few were aware. It was her sunny smile, bright spirits, and ready sympathy that appealed to the people in general.

She was fresh, innocent, and sweet to look upon, as she sat there alone on the platform during the solo of the contralto singer. A glint of gold could be seen here and there in the waves of her light-brown, fluffy hair, and her fair complexion was enhanced by the dark-blue straw hat which she wore. It was a very inexpensive one, simply trimmed, with a large, graceful ribbon bow of blue and some crushed white roses, but it was very becoming and shed a soft shade upon the fair skin, which was beginning to take on a rosy glow in the excitement of the moment, while the blue eyes appeared to grow deeper in color.

Her dress was also of blue, plainly but tastefully made. The waist was opened at the throat over

a dainty V-shaped yoke of soft white lace and chiffon, with undersleeves of the same. She had discarded her gloves, and her hands lay folded in her lap.

As the last note died away there was a profound stillness. It seemed to Evelyn that she could plainly hear her heart beat. She rose and straightened herself up to the full height of her five feet six inches, and stepped forward to the desk with all the dignity the occasion demanded.

CHAPTER IV.

"The subject I had selected for our Christian Endeavor meeting this week," Evelyn began, "is 'Let us go on unto perfection.' Although at the time I had the young in mind, it is a subject that can be applied to all. For some days I had been searching for a verse to base my talk on. Looking through my Bible, almost at random, one day, I was attracted by a verse in Hebrews, and it held me. The words seemed to stand out from the page, so great was the impression they made upon me, especially that one sentence in it, 'Let us go on unto perfection.' The entire verse, the first in the sixth chapter of the book reading thus: 'Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.'

"I wish that I could convey to you something of the impression this verse made upon me at the time, bringing before me, as it did so vividly, the great sea of life, full of human driftwood, totally without any high plans or holy purposes; but far greater than this wish is my desire to be able to convey to the young here to-night, something of the importance, the significance of that one line, 'Let us go on unto perfection,' or, as the margin has it, 'unto

full growth,' 'unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.'

"How many of us, either young or old, stop to think how imperfect we are; and if we do, realize that the great glory of human life should be to climb up out of the imperfect toward the perfect, and feel all the time that somehow there is an unseen Hand beckoning, and invisible, eternal Arms underneath us. 'Deus volt!' was the cry of the Crusader on his march to rescue the Holy Sepulchre from infidel hands, and the burning conviction that it was the will of Heaven, lifted the Crusaders out of the vulgar, and gave them an honored place among the achievements of men. 'God wills it!' may be our cry—not as we march toward the Holy Land, but as we advance toward a holy life. And *are* we advancing toward this, dear friends? That is the vital question. What are we doing with our lives to-day? What to us seems to be most worth while? Is it wealth? Is it power? Or is it fame? And if we should succeed in achieving any one of these, what, after all, have we gained for our ultimate good, our eternal welfare? Riches, as we all know, will vanish in a night; ambitions also are often defeated, and fame may utterly fail. But, oh, that our eyes were open to see that which is in truth most worth while for each of us to strive for—the building of character to please the Most High. Strange, but the greatest of all achievements has the fewest aspirants, and it is no doubt owing to the fact that the natural tendency of man is ever downward. The

physical pull is a mighty power, and many do not even make an attempt to resist it. Just carnal pleasures, only material well-being, drifting with the tide, hushing one's conscience to sleep; knowing the truth, but still remaining indifferent to it. In loftier moments, perhaps, the better self held up a picture of high attainments that charmed just for a time, and then it was snatched away. Visions and dreams of what might have been came up to mock, like fitful spirits of the night. Only one short life, and it is wasted! Only one race, and it is lost! Only one fight, and it results in defeat! Ah, what other purgatory is needed, dear friends, than an awakened conscience with a keen sense of failure. And our lives will be failures unless we have placed ourselves under the guidance of our Heavenly Father—unless we make our wills subservient to His by a complete surrender of ourselves to Him. No matter how brilliant we are, or how successful we may be in gaining the best that this world has to offer, I am assured of this one thing, that we can never reach our best without a close companionship with Christ, because we were meant to live in communion with God, to receive from Him all that we lack: His holiness for our sins; His strength for our weakness; His wisdom for our ignorance. And so, if we close our heart's door to Him, there will always be a void of which we are ever conscious.

“The first step that must be taken before we can begin our climb to the lofty plateau of perfection, as the author of the Hebrews has shown us, is that

we must realize that Christ through His death has become the author of eternal salvation. We must understand that it is only through Him that we find forgiveness of sin, cleansing from sin, strength to climb up the toilsome road to the ideal life, and the power to grow into His likeness, from glory unto glory. How often has it been asked, 'Is there no other way to go unto perfection but by this narrow way, through Christ?' Can we not do so by our good works, by the development of our characters, by keeping before us high ideals, by living an irreproachable life among men? Isn't this the whole duty of man? Like Naaman of old, we ask, 'Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? May we not wash in them and be clean?'

"Ah, my dear friends, it is the very simplicity of the command that offends us. We want to do some great thing, and because we are told simply to repent and accept the imputed righteousness of Christ, or, as our Lord put it, 'To be born again,' we are humiliated, and turn away with rage, as Naaman did and endeavor to work out our own salvation by our own strength, and according to our short-sighted view of things. But alas, conduct is faulty, and character is frail. We overestimate our strength, and undervalue the power of sin. Sooner or later the awakening will come, and we will be forced to acknowledge that we have failed utterly; but it is often not until we are bruised and bleeding from our unsuccessful efforts to ascend that we are enabled

to realize that we can never reach the goal without the sustaining arm of God Almighty to encourage and guide our trembling footsteps along the perilous climb.

“No doubt you all know the story of King Arthur and the Sable Knight. How the Knight, who lived in the lonely castle beside the bridge on which was the sable shield, had defeated all the brave knights of Briton, and hung their shields upon the apple tree, and Arthur hears of him, and cannot rest until he has had an encounter with him. His sword is broken in the fight, and he is sorely wounded, but still his purpose is to fight again. Then you know how he finds the golden sword—Excalibur, and with that he defeats with ease the Sable Knight.

“It is like that with us. Sin is the Sable Knight; he has defeated many and many a brave warrior, and has taken away his shield, but with Excalibur—with Christ, we are more than conquerors.

“What an inspiration it should be to us to know that our Creator made us for better things! Christ demands that we all strive after perfection—and He stands ready to help, to guide us, if we will only accept His offer. With His aid, man can make endless advance. He can rise into ampler worlds, expand into larger powers, command fuller sweeps, and even achieve diviner sympathies, and can be fit for companionship, at last, of no less than the Master Himself.

“The great and good in all the Christian centuries have been seeking perfection, as for ‘hidden treas-

ures.' Sometimes they have been goaded by the sense of unworthiness, sometimes lured by bright visions of celestial glory to be attained. But they never yielded the search until they yielded up life itself. It may have been a Paul with his splendid fight to keep the body under, or a Columba in the early centuries in Ireland, building monasteries and weeping over his sins; or it may be a knightly soul of these latter days in his own quest of the 'Holy Grail'—with that glorious vision on his soul, to be what God would have him.

"Perfection, then, I have tried to prove, is life's great terminal. The word itself is freighted with meaning. It signifies toiling up through to the heights of power. It means doing our part, and a willingness to shoulder our share. It may be approached in various ways—through suffering, along the highway of self-control, and again by service. But, in the way of service, we must not think that it is required of us to do some great thing, some wonderfully heroic deed for which the world will long sing our praises. But in the way of service—what God required, is for us to give Him what we have, to take up the duties He has set before us; and whether they be small or great, there is no discrimination in the sight of God, if we give to Him all that we have.

"There is always great rejoicing in Heaven over a sinner who repenteth, even though that repentance may occur when on the very brink of eternity. But how beautiful the thought, what joy to contemplate,

that we had given the best years of our lives in the service of the Master, and that we did not wait until we were old and hardened by sin before we sought Him! And what guarantee have we that a conscience hushed to sleep all through life, will awaken in time for a death-bed repentance? Then, too, life is uncertain; and we know not the day, nor the hour, when the messenger may come to carry us across the border-line to the great unknown, where we will be asked to give an account of our stewardship, and compelled to stand within the confines of eternity before our life-structure. The scaffolding will then be taken down, and oh! what a glorious awakening if we should find that, with God's help through all the years of life, we had built divinely, with the Master Builder's guidance, and without realizing how well we were doing, how closely we were conforming to His image? What a glad surprise, what indescribable joy, to know that all that we had done met with the Master Builder's approval, and to hear Him say—"Well done! Enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll;
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine out-grown shell by life's unresting sea!"

CHAPTER V.

In the audience that Sunday evening sat both Whitfield and Scott, but in different parts of the church. They congratulated themselves on their good fortune in being present on such a novel occasion.

If Frank Whitfield had been interested before in the clergyman's daughter, it would be difficult to imagine the extent of his admiration on this particular evening, when he saw her in this new and most unexpected rôle. He sat watching her with a keen interest, listening intently, not a word, not a motion escaping him.

At first his interest and admiration were centered altogether in the personality of the girl, but as she progressed with her talk, he began to take a deeper interest in what she was saying, outside of all the personal attractions she held for him; and he wondered, at times, if she could be the very same young lady whom he saw, just the day before, racing down the hillside. The two pictures presented such a contrast, that even in the midst of his most serious attention a bit of a smile would play over his features whenever he thought of it.

With every minute, however, he found himself growing more and more absorbed in the lesson that was so simply, but clearly, being pointed out, until finally he became conscious of a new awakening.

The Christian religion and its relation to life seemed to be unfolding itself before him in a new light.

He could not have explained it, but somehow every word, as it came to him from the lips of the young girl on the platform, sank deep into his heart, and awakened his soul as it had never been before.

Little by little the dark curtain of his past rolled up, disclosing his weaknesses and imperfections as he had heretofore never seen them, and he realized how far short he had come of making even an attempt to perfect himself as taught by the Scriptural lesson according to it, he saw very plainly that the goal for which he had been aiming was not in accordance with the Divine Will, but a purely selfish one, with only one object in view—to rise in his profession, so that he would succeed in making a name for himself, and he looked up to in the eyes of men.

He now saw that, although to a certain extent such an aim would be most natural, and highly proper and commendable, it would fall far short of reaching its highest purpose—as would every aim in life, unless it was made subservient to the control and guidance of the Divine Law.

Evelyn gained more confidence in herself as she continued, and grew proportionately earnest, while the interest of her hearers deepened with every minute. It was very evident to Whitfield that the fair young substitute on the platform was in sympathy with every word that she spoke; and he was

assured by her earnestness, together with what he knew of her life and character, that her whole heart responded to the lesson she was pointing out, and there was no doubt in his mind but that it was her aim to go on unto perfection, to aspire to something higher than what this world could give.

Though naturally sunny in disposition, and, from all appearances, to the casual observer, apparently care-free, Evelyn Drayton had her struggles, her trials and cares, from which none are exempt; but with her they had never appeared quite the same since her soul had awakened to its needs, and the faith was conceived which ever afterwards exercised a powerful influence over her life.

Before she was half through she had lost all self-consciousness and timidity, and her voice became full and strong in her growing earnestness, so that she could be heard distinctly all over the church. Occasionally she hesitated in her search for words to carry her point to the best advantage, but not long enough to detract any from the little discourse, or to give any one in the audience the least uneasiness of her making a failure in this respect or not proving master of the situation. Now and then she would unconsciously make use of gestures, once even bringing her hand down quite forcibly upon the desk.

Instinctively she felt that she was carrying her hearers with her. The audience sat as though spell-bound, every eye riveted upon her, and every heart, it seemed, aroused to a sense of its own individual

weaknesses by the influence of the appeal to the conscience. Now and then her face lighted up with an expression of indescribable sweetness, a reflection, many thought, from the soul within; then again the brow would knit, the eyes flash, and the voice tremble with emotion, according to the extent to which her own heart responded to the views expressed.

So absorbed had Whitfield become, so agitated by the rush of new thoughts which the talk inspired, that he started as though awakened from a deep dream when the end came.

He looked at his watch.

"Have I been here an hour?" he thought.

Immediately after the closing prayer, Evelyn disappeared. The congregation was greatly disappointed, many pressing forward to offer congratulations, Whitfield among them.

"I will call at the house and inquire after her father," he decided. "Perhaps she can spare me a few minutes."

As Evelyn expected, she found on her return that her father had gone to bed, but was waiting anxiously to see her, her mother informed her.

"I did better than I ever expected—actually the congregation appeared to be interested in every word!" Evelyn said, throwing her arms about her mother, her face radiant with happiness.

"I felt sure that you would make a success of it. It was something so novel, you know—and you have quite a talent in that line. But, my child—"

Mrs. Drayton suddenly exclaimed—"you are fairly trembling, and your hands are very cold—and on such a warm night, too—" rubbing them alternately between her own.

Evelyn laughed merrily.

"Well, now, Mother dear, who wouldn't be just a little bit excited after preaching a first sermon? Father, you know, had a chill, followed by a fever from which he did not recover for a week, and I am not nearly so bad as that. Listen!—he is calling, and I am keeping him waiting all this time."

The next minute she was by his bedside, relating to him all that had taken place, from her viewpoint; in the midst of which her two sisters came bounding into the room, interrupting her by hugs and kisses, showering upon her, at the same time, the many complimentary messages that had been given them by the congregation.

"Oh, it was great, great! Sister Evelyn!" Dorothy exclaimed, clapping her hands enthusiastically, which made even the sick clergyman laugh.

At that instant there appeared in the doorway two sleepy boys, in their night-clothes, rubbing their eyes.

"What's all the fun about?" asked little Dick, with a yawn, both of them having been awakened by the unusual commotion.

"Why, Sister Evelyn preached to-night—Father was too ill to go over—and the people were delighted," explained Dorothy.

"Pshaw! Why didn't you tell us, so we could

have heard her too?" pouted Spencer, who was three years Dick's senior, having just passed his tenth birthday.

"Yes, why didn't you let us know, so we could have gone to the show too?" chimed in Dick.

This brought forth peals of laughter, at which Dick expressed his resentment by bursting into tears. There was a sudden cessation; everyone drew a long face, out of respect for the child's hurt feelings.

"Poor little dear—never mind!" coaxed Evelyn, taking him in her arms. "I am sorry you were disappointed; but you see it was done so quickly that I did not have time to think of anything. I won't forget you the next time, though—I promise you that!"—and she kissed him, wiping away the tears.

A light rap at the door leading to the hall interrupted all conversation, and Evelyn, being nearby, opened it. There stood Betsy, the negro maid, who had lived with the clergyman ever since his marriage, and whose parents and grandparents had been slaves in his mother's family.

She had danced on her knee all five of the minister's children, and her interest in each one was as great as that of a real mother; in fact, she carried it to such an extent, at times, that it was annoying, although, as a rule, it afforded much amusement for the entire family. They rarely chided her, however, for her well-meant over-solicitousness and too-ready advice, that was given daily "by the yard," as Dorothy put it; for, by her faithfulness and untiring

devotion, she had been an untold help and comfort to Mrs. Drayton, which they all never failed to appreciate thoroughly.

"Honey, deah's a young gen'l'man waitin' fo' t' see yo' downstyars," she said in a loud whisper, a broad grin spreading over her whole face, as she stood smoothing down her white apron over her portly figure.

Transferring Dick to her mother's arms for a further coddling and coaxing, Evelyn stepped into the hall and closed the door behind her.

"Didn't he give you his name, or a card, Betsy?" she asked, moving toward a nearby room and motioning the negress to follow.

"Bless yo' soul, no, honey!"—with a disgusted air, rolling her eyes. "Deah was no 'casion fo' dat, cose I recommembered him well. Whitfield, chile, dat's his name. He looked fo' his card, but couldn't find any, so I's jes' tole him p'litely dat it made no diffunce, as I's recommembered him. I 'clare t' goodness, but he's a fine gen'l'man, Miss Evelyn," she went on, whispering in suppressed excitement, "and I's suah dat he b'longs t' one ob de fust famblys. I's knows de diffunce," she rattled on, shaking her head. "Yo' can't—yes, honey, dat's it—jes' pin dat lock ob hair up on dat side. Mr. Whitfield nebber looks crumpled up 'bout hisse'f—mighty 'ticular gen'l'man, I tell yo'!"

With arms akimbo, she stood viewing Evelyn critically from head to foot, while she stood before a bureau straightening up her hair.

"Yo're a real born lady too, honey, dat's de trufe, an' doan' fo'get it!" she began again, with a proud toss of her head. "I 'clar t' goodness, yo' look s'prisin' beautiful to-night, chile—sich red cheeks, and eyes all sparklin' laik."

"Oh, Betsy, Betsy, you will certainly turn my head yet, with all your flattery!" said Evelyn, laughing—"but of course we are all beautiful in your eyes—" giving the old negress a pat as she passed her and hurried down the stairs.

"Co'se yo' is!" returned Betsy, her eyes fairly shining with love and pride, as she watched the young girl over the banisters until she disappeared, then started for the back stairs that led to her domain.

"I's almos' begin t' suspectionate dat he lub dat bressed chile, or if he doan' now, he's gwinter 'fo' berry long," she thought. "Jes' de way dat he sez—'Is Miss Drayton in?' is 'nough fo' me—so sweet-laik, jes' as if he lubbed t' roll his tongue 'round her name laik yo' would a lump of sugar. I's took t' notice ob dat berry thing last summer, an' dis winter, too, when he cum all de way from New York t' see her."

Whitfield rose when he heard Evelyn's footsteps on the stairs, and met her at the parlor door.

"Good-evening, Miss Drayton. I fear it is an intrusion to call at this time, when no doubt you are in attendance upon your father, but I was very anxious to learn more about his condition; also to congratulate you on your great success this evening."

"Thank you, Mr. Whitfield. I am glad to say my father is much better, and we now have every reason to believe that the attack will not be a prolonged or severe one; and, so far as intruding is concerned," Evelyn continued, in her usual gracious and cordial manner, "I can relieve your mind on that point, I am sure, when I tell you that I left no less than five in attendance, if I should count my two small brothers, who appeared on the scene just before I left my father's bed-room."

"That eases my mind considerably," laughed Whitfield, as they seated themselves. "I am glad to hear such good reports. I feared at first that his condition might be more serious than you led us to believe, especially when you disappeared so suddenly after services, leaving a whole army of disappointed people, to whom you refused the opportunity of offering their congratulations."

"Then you do not think I was a failure?" she queried.

"A failure?" he repeated, his face suddenly growing serious, and gazing at her with an expression that caused her to drop her eyes.

"Miss Drayton, if it is of any satisfaction to you, I will tell you truly that I have never before been so affected by a sermon."

"Mr. Whitfield! And you call that a sermon?"

"Yes; and I'm in earnest, and thought it might please you to know what it had done for at least one of your hearers. It's a fact; I have been seized with a great desire ever since to make something

better of my life than that which had heretofore been my aim."

"Why—why, it seems almost incredible, Mr. Whitfield!" gasped Evelyn, her eyes opening wide in astonishment.

At this Whitfield turned sharply, and, throwing back his head, he laughed outright.

"Well, well, Miss Drayton! That is a good one on me!" he said. "What a hardened wretch I must be in your eyes, to express such surprise at the discovery that I am not altogether proof against such appeals."

"Oh, no—no! I beg your pardon!" returned Evelyn, joining in the laugh. "You misconstrue my remark altogether, Mr. Whitfield! My thought was this—that with your education and oratorical powers, the defects of my poor little effort to-night would be so glaring in your eyes that you would be more amused than otherwise."

"You are mistaken—if there were any defects I was not conscious of them. Besides," he added, growing earnest again—"don't you know that there is a greater fascination and influence in unscholarly eloquence that is sincere, than in the most powerful eloquence without sincerity? You certainly deserve to be commended, not only for the way you succeeded to-night in reaching the hearts of your hearers, but also for the good you seem always to be doing. It never occurred to me before just how much you were constantly sacrificing yourself for others."

"Now, don't—please don't talk that way, Mr. Whitfield! I don't deserve it, because all that I do to assist my father, and in the way of charities in the town, is an actual pleasure. But I must admit that it was not always so," she added. "There was a time when these very duties were irksome, and which I made every effort to shirk for other things more to my taste and liking."

"May I ask what caused the change in your attitude toward them?" he asked, with growing interest.

Evelyn hesitated; she did not altogether see his aim in so quizzing her; but there was something in his voice, his face, that assured her at least of his sincerity, and she answered, after a slight hesitation: "It is simply that my eyes have been opened to a new conception of life since I have accepted Christ as my Master."

The young man looked thoughtful; he could hardly comprehend all that such a change signified, of which she spoke; it appeared to him so unusual, so ridiculous for a young woman of her age and attainments to take delight in such a woeful line of work.

"You don't believe me, then, I suppose?" questioned Evelyn, with a twinkle, the dimples playing about her mouth now, at the puzzled, questioning look he gave her.

"I do not doubt your word for an instant," he declared, rousing himself, "only to me it seems almost incredible that a young girl of your age should so devote herself to such work, and care so little for the social pleasures of life."

"So little for the social pleasures?" repeated Evelyn, with alertness. "Why, Mr. Whitfield, my whole life is one continual round of social pleasures."

Whitfield threw her a questioning look again, at which her face relaxed, and she burst into a gay little laugh.

"She is just charming!" he thought. "Of course I understand," he said, "but I was looking at it from another viewpoint. What a boredom it must be from yours!"

"On the contrary, it affords such an endless variety of entertainment that one could not possibly be bored. I am really not joking, though, Mr. Whitfield"—said she, changing from gay to grave—"when I say that I have gained a world of experience from the kind of social life to which I refer. Being a minister's daughter, I have had the opportunity of seeing life in many phases. I have mingled with the poor, visited them in their homes, listened to their sorrows, and learned of what their few pleasures consist. I have become well acquainted with many people of the great middle class, and not a few of the wealthy and fashionable. I have also come in contact with many scholarly and cultured people, as well as those who are religious. Do you think I could derive the same benefit, the real good, from society in the other sense. I could not begin to tell you what it has done for me, this coming in contact with human nature in so many different walks of life. Some one has said: 'There is no personality so poor, but that, could we under-

stand it, it might enrich our world with beauty unforeseen.' I have found this to be true; I have made the discovery among characters of the lowliest. I believe everything has its value in this world, down to the most insignificant of creatures."

"According to your idea, such social pleasures—if you can so call them—cannot, of course, be anything but profitable. I fear, though, that I am too worldly to be entirely in sympathy with you."

The young man looked very grave, and gazed at the girl before him with a deeper interest than ever, thinking how equally well she would be able to lead in the fashionable world, as in missionary meetings and charities, were her inclinations in that direction.

He turned toward her suddenly, alert, eager, a tint of color coming to his pale cheeks.

"Miss Drayton," he said, "do you know, I would greatly enjoy hearing some of your views on Christianity—what you feel it has done for you, and what you think it has done for humanity."

"My views on that subject, Mr. Whitfield, are very simple; but if you desire to hear them, I should be pleased to talk with you about it. Nowadays, you know, religion is not considered a subject suitable for drawing-room conversation; and yet I do not see why it should be kept strictly for the pulpit and Sabbath-school, especially when it is one of such vital importance to every human soul.

"However, I do believe, with my father, that, as a rule, people do not like to be preached at too often, and that more real good can be done to non-believers

by example than in any other way. But of course there are times when one must speak."

"And this is one," spoke up Whitfield.

"Then I suppose there is no alternative but to comply with your request," laughed Evelyn.

"Of course it will be necessary for us to be alone when discussing such a serious subject," Whitfield ventured. "And, judging from all accounts I hear of the numerous callers you are having nowadays, I fear we shall have few opportunities."

"You must not believe all that you hear," Evelyn said, with a mischievous sparkle in her eyes. "Anyway, a little intermission of frivolity between such talks might be very beneficial."

"Yes, if the little intermissions do not prove to be of too great length, or I fear in the meantime I will be going on unto destruction, instead of perfection."

"I am hoping better things of you," Evelyn said, as he took her hand at the parlor door.

"Don't be too sure of me!" he laughed. "I am a very weak mortal, remember, and just about to take my first step."

"When you once decide to take a step that is for your good, you will push ahead past all obstacles—I at least have that confidence in you."

"Thank you! I hope you may never have that confidence misplaced, Miss Drayton; but I expect to have many a stumble, nevertheless, on my way to perfection," he laughed, bowing himself out of the door.

CHAPTER VI.

There was one person, at least, in the church on the evening when Evelyn took her father's place in the pulpit, who, at the time, was not particularly affected by the lesson she taught.

It was Adele Kingsley, a wealthy New York society girl, who was in love with Frank Whitfield and had for some time past entertained suspicions of having a possible rival in the clergyman's daughter of Clover Hills. To satisfy her curiosity, she had recently, with her maid, taken a suite of rooms at the Hotel Elberon, in Clover Hills, refusing to accompany her parents to London, as had been her first intention.

She declared that she was totally unequal to participating in the round of pleasures which she knew awaited her coming at her uncle's, on the other side. She urged her parents to start ahead, and consent to her taking a rest of a few weeks at Clover Hills, until thoroughly recuperated.

Clover Hills, she argued, was an excellent place for a rest cure. They finally agreed to her plan, and preparations were immediately made for her to spend a few weeks there, and join her parents in London later on.

Adele Kingsley was an only child, and a spoiled one. She had been brought up in the lap of luxury, petted, indulged, and waited upon all her life.

Trained in a different way, she would very likely have developed into a much better woman; but the good traits she started out with in life had become almost obliterated by a life of pleasure and ease, just as the fairest flower will become wilted by too much sunshine. For twenty-three years she had toyed with life, and never had a higher aim than to enjoy herself, to shine in society, and to gain the admiration of all men in the social world with whom she came in contact.

She was striking in appearance, and handsome, rather than beautiful. She possessed a clear olive complexion, dark hair, and eyes that were dark and lustrous. She was tall, well-proportioned, and moved with a queenly air and grace that had been acquired by careful study. Every gown she wore was a work of art, her jewels the envy of many, though she always displayed good taste in wearing them. Before she was eighteen she was an adept in the art of flirting, and soon realized her power in bringing a man to her feet if she so desired. This had been a pastime with her; and when a flirtation would end in a proposal she would express her amazement, and declare that she had never dreamed of their entertaining any serious intentions. So well did she play the part that they could not openly accuse her of wilfully making a dupe of them, although several were of the opinion that they had been hypnotized.

The one who appeared to be the least influenced by her charms was the one she generally preferred

to make her special target. It was nothing to her credit to ensnare those who possessed no special attractions, no force of character—in fact, the commonplace.

For a year past she had used every art of which she was capable to win the aristocratic Frank Whitfield, but this time it was not with the view of throwing him over if she succeeded. She had in reality developed a violent passion for him. Outside of this, he possessed the three essential qualities which she had often declared the man whom she married, must possess—wealth, family, and good looks. To her great disappointment, she found that in this particular young man she had a most difficult subject to bring under the influence of her charms, and it set her to thinking. From several remarks he had made during the winter, in reference to Evelyn Drayton, it had suddenly occurred to her that she might be the one who was standing in her way, although she could hardly deem it possible that she could have a rival in a poor clergyman's daughter—plain, commonplace, and prosaic, as she pictured Evelyn Drayton.

Yes, it was most unlikely that such a girl could attract Frank Whitfield to any serious extent, she had concluded; for he had come in contact with the most beautiful, wealthy, and fascinating young women that this country and Europe could produce, in comparison with whom the minister's daughter must appear most insignificant. This conclusion, however, did not dispel the suspicion entirely; there

still remained the doubt, and she determined at least to make an investigation.

A dozen times a day she went over the last interview she had had with Whitfield, which was just before her plans were changed for the summer. She remembered every word, every look, every act, and still could not come to a satisfactory interpretation of his real feelings toward her.

"Yes, he appeared several times as though he had something on his mind," she would muse. "And once I actually thought he was about to declare his love, when suddenly his whole manner changed completely, and he assumed that cold reserve, which he can do to perfection. Ah, yes!" she would sigh—"there was a mystery about it all, as though he were eager to tell me something, but was held back by some mysterious influence."

To find that, after all her efforts, she had so far failed in winning this man over, piqued her as she had never been before; and the disappointment was beginning to prey on her mind. She had never been thwarted in anything that she had set her heart upon; and to come face to face with failure in this, the greatest desire of her life, roused her to action, and she determined to ascertain the cause, if it were possible.

Accompanied by her maid, she had, that Sunday evening, gone to church, for the express purpose of seeing Evelyn Drayton, who, she had heard, sang in the choir. She entered just a minute or two before Evelyn, and sat near the door.

A sigh of relief escaped her, after looking over the congregation, that Frank Whitfield was evidently not present. She saw Alfred Scott, whom she knew only slightly, and wondered what attraction had brought him there, knowing him to be a gay fellow of the world, and, as she imagined, not accustomed to church-going.

"Can it be that he, too, is an admirer?" she thought, leaning forward and studying Evelyn critically when she stepped to the edge of the platform and made the announcement.

It was not many minutes before she was forced to acknowledge that the young woman on the platform possessed attractions that were well worthy of arousing her jealousy, try as she would to think otherwise. Although in the way of character Evelyn Drayton was of a type entirely different from the young women with whom she had been accustomed to associate, in the fashionable world, she was conscious of the fact that the clergyman's daughter was by no means commonplace.

"Evidently well educated, too," she thought, as Evelyn progressed with her talk. "And she certainly has a great deal of character; I can find no fault with her appearance, either," and here her dark eyes flashed. "She is a born lady in her manner, too, and so strong and self-reliant—at the same time, how childlike and modest she appears. Ah, would she not be just the type that would attract a man like Frank Whitfield?"

She leaned farther forward in her eagerness to

hear her and continue her close study, when suddenly, through a space, she saw Frank Whitfield. Involuntarily she clutched at her side as though seized with a sharp pain, and panted in her excitement.

“Are you ill?” whispered Hannah, the maid.

“No—no—not at all!” she returned quickly, in her ear. “That sermon is so—so impressive,” she added, after a pause.

“The Lord has certainly guided her footsteps here to-night, to be converted,” thought Hannah, who was a very devout woman.

But the young lady in question was at that moment very far from experiencing any spiritual awakening; on the contrary, never in her life did she entertain such bitter, envious thoughts toward a fellow-creature, as she did then toward the young speaker on the platform.

At the sight of Frank Whitfield she felt that her worst suspicions were confirmed, and a jealous rage swept over her like a wild torrent that had suddenly broken away the last barrier that had held it in check, carrying before it every vestige of reason. Yes, her very senses, for a time, appeared to be engulfed in the raging whirlpool of her passion, making it impossible to carry out a rational train of thought. The dilated nostrils, rapid breathing, and flushed face, were sufficient evidences of some unusual disturbance, which, fortunately for her, just at that time, might easily be attributed to the effect of the sermon; for not a

few gave marked evidences of being deeply stirred by it. Her eyes would flash alternately from Evelyn to Whitfield, in her eagerness to discover, if possible, any signs of recognition going on between them.

She noted the profound interest of Frank Whitfield which could not be doubted. His eyes were riveted upon Evelyn, never wandering for an instant.

To think that the girl in the pulpit had been able to so hold his attention was too overwhelming for words. With all her studied arts, the one of preaching a sermon was hopelessly beyond her powers to attain; and if it required talent in that direction to win over the great prize in the matrimonial market, she argued, she might as well right now give up the struggle.

She quieted down considerably, however, as the minutes rolled by, and toward the close of the sermon had succeeded in getting herself well under control, and began to look at things in a more favorable light.

"After all, his attending church is no evidence that he is in love with her!" she concluded. "And I will not give up all hope until I have some positive proof. I shall endeavor to meet this little saint and study her; no doubt I shall soon be able to discover whether I have any actual grounds on which to base my fears."

The instant the last hymn was finished, she hurried out with Hannah, not caring to meet Whit-

field and arouse in him any suspicions of her real motive in coming to Clover Hills. It was refreshing to feel the cool air fanning her heated face, and she began to take a more jocund view of the whole affair.

"I'm an idiot!" she declared. "My jealousy is getting the better of my judgment. I must take things more coolly, if I want to succeed in sifting this matter to the bottom."

"Wasn't that a beautiful sermon, and did ever a minister preach better than that young girl?" said Hannah, breaking in upon her reveries.

"It was wonderful!" Adele returned. "There's no doubt about it. What an unusual thing for a young girl to do! She certainly held the attention of the entire audience to the end."

"Indeed she did, Miss Adele, and it would be a heart of stone that was not able to see its evil ways to-night."

"You are right, Hannah, for even mine softened. I was greatly impressed, and intend to start right now to mend my evil ways, which you well know are almost innumerable. Yes, Hannah, I intend to go to church regularly while I am here, and, if possible, to become acquainted with Miss Drayton. I am simply infatuated with her."

"The Lord be praised!" thought Hannah, gazing up at the starlit sky.

"There was a notice given out this evening, you remember," continued Adele, "that the Ladies' Auxiliary would meet on Tuesday afternoon, and

at the close of the meeting the usual social gathering would take place, to which all the ladies of the church, as well as strangers, were cordially invited."

"Yes, Miss Adele, I remember."

"I think I will present myself at the close of the meeting, Hannah; it will give me a splendid opportunity to meet the clergyman's daughter."

"How wonderful are Thy ways, oh Lord!" was Hannah's silent prayer.

CHAPTER VII.

The next morning Adele started off for a walk in the hope of meeting Frank Whitfield. She was very anxious that he should learn as soon as possible of her presence in the town, but in a way that would show no desire or effort on her part to seek him.

For this reason she had decided not to call on Mrs. Whitfield, though she would in all probability look for her, and even invite her to "Idlewild;" for the families had been on friendly terms for some years. But Adele had planned that as soon as she knew Whitfield had discovered she was in the town, she would write and tell his mother of her condition, that she was taking a rest cure and would consequently have to be excused from calling on her.

It was a beautiful day, the air deliciously balmy, and the first June roses were blooming in many gardens, greeting her as she passed along the tree-lined avenue. Now and then the soft breezes came laden with their perfume, mingled occasionally with the fragrant scent of honeysuckle. A robin trilled as it flew past her from a hedge, and her spirits brightened considerably under the influence of nature's charms, giving a briskness to her step and a deeper color to her cheeks. Her energies had, in truth, become somewhat fagged at the close of the

winter, but she appeared to have fully recovered from her indisposition of the early spring.

She had decided, however, to play the part of a semi-invalid on her arrival at Clover Hills, and had even consulted a physician, to help along in the farce, that it might be generally understood that she had come there to take a rest cure. She fully realized that every precaution must be resorted to, in order to keep her real motive for coming from Frank Whitfield.

"Bah! it is ridiculous," she thought, with a proud toss of her head. "To think of his having even the ghost of a desire to throw himself away on such an unsophisticated recluse! And after all," she argued, "it is not so surprising that he should occasionally attend church—there is so little for one to do in Clover Hills!"

With these consoling thoughts, she continued her way to the town, passed the church, and the parsonage, at which she glanced with a look of scorn, comparing it with her own palatial home. In a little while she had reached the outskirts on the opposite side of the town, but kept right on until within a short distance of "Idlewild," when she retraced her steps, and made direct for the business portion of the town, then back again to the hotel, greatly disappointed.

A number of trunks were being dumped from an express wagon, and the name on several of them attracted her, "M. L. Anderson, New York," she read.

"It must be Marie Anderson," she decided. "What in the name of all that's good is she coming to this place for? There can be no attraction at Clover Hills for a girl of her tastes—besides, they have a villa at Newport."

A few minutes later she heard the men taking trunks into the suite opposite hers, and opening the door on a crack, she saw Marie Anderson and her maid directing the men.

"Pshaw!" she pouted, with a convulsive shrug, closing the door with a bang, like some wilful, petulant child—"this will put a damper on all my plans; even if she is only a calling acquaintance, it will be impossible for me to steer clear of her. It is exasperating—so it is!—that I should at the very outset be brought face to face with an obstacle like this!"

For some minutes she walked the floor in her agitation, but finally cooled down, and began to treat the matter more philosophically. She realized that there was only one course to pursue—to handle the whole situation as tactfully as possible.

An hour later she crossed the hall and knocked at the door. It was opened by the new arrival herself.

"Miss Kingsley!" she exclaimed. "How under the sun did you ever happen here?"

"That is what I would like to ask you," Adele laughed, as they shook hands. "You look entirely out of place at this hotel."

"Ditto. Do come in, and tell me, first of all,

about yourself, Miss Kingsley; then I will tell my story. I thought you had gone abroad with your parents."

"That really was my first intention, but I had something like a nervous breakdown after the strenuous winter, and my physician advised me to seek some quiet spot and take a rest cure before starting in on another round of gayeties, which I knew awaited me this spring in London."

"How strange! Your story is practically mine—I was almost a wreck after the winter's campaign, and have come here to try to recuperate before I start in again at Newport, where, as you well know, the demands are frequently greater than during the winter"—having laughed in a manner that a keen observer would have interpreted as being more hysterical than natural.

"And to think that we both should have selected the same place," Adele began again, with assumed gayety, looking innocently into the eyes of the young woman beside her, who was a striking contrast, being as fair as Adele was dark, and considerably stouter—not a beauty by any means, but possessing attractions of no mean order, in her fair skin, beautiful golden hair, and a manner vivacious and pleasing.

"I consider it very fortunate that we should have met in this way, and I am delighted to discover, on my arrival, that there is at least one person in the hotel with whom I am acquainted," Marie said. "It will certainly help along wonderfully in

whiling away what would otherwise be many a tedious hour."

While she spoke, her heart flatly contradicted every word, regretting that Adele was not at the bottom of the sea.

"Yes," sighed Adele, "suffering from the same complaint, we can surely be of great help and comfort to each other. It takes a nervous person to sympathize with a nervous one, you know"—wishing all the time that she had the power of transporting Marie to some far-off planet.

"You certainly show no signs of a breakdown in your face, Miss Kingsley."

"Neither do you!" Adele spoke up. She was very desirous, for a few weeks at least, to look pale and interesting, and had been for a week past dieting herself, in the hope of bringing about this result.

"Oh, I know it, Miss Kingsley! I have the same things to contend with," Marie said, consolingly. "No one ever gets any sympathy in this world who looks well."

Adele heaved a deep sigh. "I've had my patience tried beyond endurance," she said, "by hearing every day—'how well you look!' when in reality I am in tortures the greater part of the time."

"I know all about it, and can sympathize with you thoroughly," Marie sniffled. "But what a comfort it is that we understand and appreciate each other!"

"I consider it a godsend that we have been thrown

together," Adele said, wiping her eyes, from which she had done her best to squeeze a few tears, without success.

That afternoon Adele returned from another walk, without meeting the object of her quest. She was almost ready to give up in despair, but started off again the next morning with fresh hopes, which only ended in another disappointment.

In the afternoon, as she had planned, she went to the church, and had just entered the door when she saw Evelyn Drayton coming toward her.

"A stranger in Clover Hills, are you not?" she asked pleasantly.

"I am," Adele replied, in as gracious a manner as she could command. "My name is Miss Kingsley, and I have run up from New York for a stay of a few weeks, with the hope of building up my health, which has been very much impaired."

"Is it possible! No one would imagine it, judging from all outward appearances," Evelyn said, with a gay little flash of humor from her dark-blue eyes.

Adele gave a queer little laugh.

"It does seem ridiculous, I acknowledge, to talk of ill-health when one looks well, but that is the unfortunate part of it. I have already discovered that one suffering from a nervous disorder rarely shows it in the face; consequently they receive very little sympathy."

"It does appear that people in general have very little appreciation for the nervous invalid, and yet I imagine that one so afflicted should be given the

greatest consideration," Evelyn said sweetly. "I have come in contact with several nervous invalids, and have learned considerable through this experience. However, let us not continue talking about the complaint," she added brightly, "as I have also learned by the experience I have gained in the matter, that it is part of the cure to refrain from discussing the symptoms. Allow me to introduce you to the ladies."

Adele nodded, and followed her to the forward part of the lecture-room, where about sixty or more were assembled, chatting and laughing, their ages ranging from eighteen to seventy-five years.

Although it was something entirely outside of Adele's sphere to attend a gathering of this kind, she appeared to be perfectly at her ease, and equal to all the requirements of the occasion. She was surprised to find among the number not a few who were refined and cultured; in fact, she was obliged several times while conversing with some, vigorously to exert her intellect in order to make intelligent answers.

She had always imagined that such gatherings were composed of a class of people entirely different, principally poor, ignorant fanatics, who considered it a sin to laugh, and who could talk of nothing but church work and missions.

She was agreeably disappointed, and, so far, well pleased with the success of her well-laid plans; and, when bidding good-by to Evelyn, she fairly gloated over her good luck, when that young lady told her

she would call at the hotel on the first opportunity. It was impossible for her to resist altogether the influence of the charming personality of the clergyman's daughter, though there was ever present a counter feeling of hatred, which was caused by her insane jealousy alone.

When she returned to her rooms, she stood before a cheval-glass and viewed herself from head to foot. The figure she saw reflected evidently met with her full approval, for a smile of complete satisfaction spread over her whole face. It was, in truth, a striking figure, tall, graceful, and stylishly, as well as most becomingly attired in a beautiful costume of mauve crêpe, and an imported picture-hat that was in correct harmony—a combination of plumes, and crushed roses of delicate pink.

For some minutes she sailed up and down before the mirror, then stood in numerous poses, turning to see herself at all angles.

"Well," she concluded, "I am at any rate as beautiful as he is handsome, and so far as *she* is concerned, there is simply no comparison at all; it's all fol-de-rol for me to be jealous of her"—giving her head a proud toss of disdain.

The blended colors of the gown and hat enhanced her complexion, and her dark eyes shone with a luster that gave a brilliancy to her whole face. It was not surprising that many called her an enchantress, for at this moment the word could be most appropriately applied.

"I am too easily discouraged—that is the trou-

ble," she soliloquized, with another sweeping glance toward the mirror. "Besides, I must remember that all men are not alike; there are some few exceptions. This one requires the most delicate handling; and don't I know, for the very reason that he is not won easily, my passion for him is growing in its intensity every day? Oh, Frank, Frank! why can't you love me?" she suddenly cried in a smothered voice, wringing her hands convulsively; but the next instant she brushed away the tears, straightened up to her full height with a look of defiance, and gazed at the mirror again. "Patience—patience!" she murmured, with a little nervous laugh. "I shall win him yet!"

With several vigorous jerks she pulled off her gloves, then removed her hat, and sat down by the window to think and further her plans.

"No—I will not be outdone by one who is so inferior, so far beneath me in social standing, looks—yes, and everything else!" she mused, gazing out over the house-tops and chimneys in the direction of the parsonage. But her nerves became tense in her great effort to ignore the contradictions that these statements forced upon her.

"Dear me! Here comes Marie Anderson, and she saw me too—pshaw! Now for another hour of torture. I am becoming so bored in my efforts to keep up this farce with her. I feel sometimes as though I would fly—and it's only about begun.—Heavens! there she is knocking! I must now invent some story in explanation of my sudden desire to

attend church socials.—“Have patience!” she hissed, when another knock came; then called sweetly—“In one minute!”

She rose, and walked reluctantly toward the door, her lips moving all the while in a volley of smothered denunciations, but when she turned the knob, the scene changed as though by magic.

“Oh, how glad I am to see you! Come in!” she cried, with an overwhelming cordiality, her face wreathed in smiles, and her whole manner so extremely gracious, that the unwelcome visitor never dreamed of its insincerity.

“How is it you are not out this lovely afternoon?” asked Marie, “nervous people, you know, must keep in the open air as much as possible.”

“I have just returned—see my hat and gloves!—and you will never guess where I have been spending the afternoon.”

“At the Japanese Bazaar, buying some of those rare pieces of bric-a-brac that have been advertised.”

“Wrong! I have been to a church social.”

“A church social!” Marie repeated with a gasp. “Well, I *am* surprised! I never imagined that such dissipations were at all in your line.”

“You are right—but come, sit down, and let me tell you all about it. First of all, I have become infatuated with Evelyn Drayton, the minister’s daughter—she is the most fascinating creature you can imagine. You will certainly have to meet her.”

“I would be delighted,” Marie returned eagerly, drawing her chair up closer to Adele’s. “Do tell

me all about her. I have heard her spoken of so frequently that I have a great curiosity to see her."

"It all happened in this way. Last Sunday evening, while out taking a stroll with Hannah, we happened to pass the church, and poor Hannah—who is so painfully pious—suggested that we go in and see what sort of a preacher Dr. Drayton is. Having nothing special to do, I consented—and what do you suppose?—instead of the minister, his daughter Evelyn appeared in the pulpit, and announced that her father had been taken suddenly ill, and if the congregation was willing, she would give a little talk she had in mind for the Christian Endeavor meeting. Of course the people offered no objection—in fact, they appeared to be very much pleased with the substitute, especially, as I have heard since, that her father's delivery has become so defective through some throat weakness, that he can scarcely be heard. But, to make a long story short, the way she spoke was something remarkable; she preached, in fact, and grew so earnest that she actually captivated the entire audience, your humble servant included. The strangest part about it was, that the little sermon itself was nothing extraordinary, but the girl appeared to be inspired, which was the secret, I think, of the influence she exerted."

"Then you have become converted!" Marie cried in amazement.

"Well, no—not quite to that extent as yet," Adele laughed. "But there is no knowing what may

happen if I remain long enough under the influence of Evelyn Drayton."

"Is she, then, such a marvel?" Marie questioned, with a great effort to keep from detection the emotion caused by Adele's words.

"Yes, she is a marvel in many ways, Miss Anderson—but you will have to see her to know just what I mean."

"Do call me Marie—we have become such good friends, it is time to lay aside all formality."

"Agreed!" answered Adele.

"Perhaps she can convert me also," Marie said with a little forced laugh.

"If you will go to church with me to-morrow evening, and remain after services, I will introduce you," suggested Adele.

"You may count on me, I assure you! I am very anxious to meet this wonderful girl-preacher. Did she appear as—" Marie cleared her throat, then continued—"as attractive at the social as she did in the pulpit?"

"Yes, I think she did. She certainly has charming manners, and a 'way' with her that is most captivating."

"A 'way' with her!" Marie cried excitedly, the blood rushing to her temples; but instantly she followed it up with a laugh to hide her agitation. "That's enough!—I never could tolerate the girl with a 'way'. Now there is Helen Moorehead—you know her, don't you?"

"Slightly."

"She is one of that kind, and so is Florence Audenried. Those two girls exasperate me with their 'way'—it is simply an acquired art used to make an impression—in other words, to fascinate, ensnare; and it is principally with men they make use of it. No, Adele, I have no faith in the minister's daughter—the girl with a 'way' is not to be trusted."

Adele opened her eyes in wonder at the excitement her friend displayed, which to her appeared absolutely unwarranted.

"Anyone might think she also had a rival in Evelyn Drayton," she thought, studying Marie closely.

"Before you condemn her," she said, "you must at least wait until you know her; she may be one who will agreeably disappoint you, in being absolutely sincere in her particular 'way'."

"Piff!—deliver me from such! I tell you they are not to be trusted, and I make no exceptions whatever!" Marie spoke up sharply, with a scornful curl of her lip. "However," she continued, with an effort to compose herself—"I shall take pleasure in meeting her just for curiosity's sake; one must do something to while away the time here, you know."

"I have a plan!" Adele exclaimed suddenly. "Let us make a study of her character, and not express an opinion until we are ready to leave Clover Hills."

"A capital idea, Adele!—it will give us something to do;—character-study is a hobby of mine."

"And mine too. Now isn't that a strange co-

incidence? It has been a favorite pastime of mine for several years, and rarely have I been mistaken in my diagnosis," Adele said, her eyes sparkling with hidden humor, so well pleased was she with the success of her scheme.

"Still, we may differ entirely—no two persons see another in exactly the same light, you know," Marie argued meditatively. "It will be curious, at any rate, to hear each other's opinion—" with a sudden burst of laughter, for which there appeared to be no occasion.

"Now the idea is this," Adele began with great enthusiasm—"for each of us to seek her society as much as possible, entirely independent of the other."

"Yes, we will call on her alone, and invite her to the hotel to dine. When I see her with you, I will not intrude, and *vice versa*," Marie rattled on excitedly, with another prolonged laugh that was entirely uncalled-for.

"Oh, we'll manage all right, I'm sure of that," Adele said, clapping her hands and joining in the laugh. "I'll wager there will not be much left of her when the 'dissection' once gets headway."

"You are right; with two such experts there will be nothing overlooked in the entire anatomy of her character!" Marie almost shouted, jerking the words out in the midst of convulsive laughter, followed by a fresh hysterical outburst from Adele—a mere subterfuge of each, to hide from the other the true nature of their feelings, which by this time had been wrought up to a pitch that was almost uncontrollable.

CHAPTER VIII.

"This is what I call a strenuous day—I do actually feel tired," thought Evelyn, as she entered her room late one afternoon, and seated herself for a few minutes' rest, before dressing for the evening. "I certainly have a wonderful amount of endurance, as everyone says, and what a fortunate thing it is that I have! It would be impossible for me to accomplish half that I do, were I a frail, delicate creature. I'm afraid sometimes I don't appreciate my health as I should.—Who can that be running up the stairs? One of the children, I suppose—and I told them to be sure and stay out-of-doors awhile longer, so that mother would not be disturbed in her sleep."

At that instant the door opened and her younger sister Elinore appeared.

"Why, Elinore! How is this?" exclaimed Evelyn. "We did not expect you for several days."

"Only the force of circumstances, I assure you, Evelyn!" returned Elinore petulantly. "Anna's aunt was taken very ill in Boston, and she and her mother were telegraphed for; consequently there was no other alternative for your humble servant than to pack up and return to her humble home."

With these words Elinore dashed a tear from her eye, and dropped into the nearest chair, a most dejected-looking individual.

The two sisters were very unlike in appearance,

Elinore being very slender, and of a complexion considerably darker than Evelyn's, with hair and eyes that were almost black. They were alike in one respect at least—each possessing an ambitious and energetic temperament; in fact, the entire family appeared to possess that particular characteristic, in a greater or less degree. The minister's household was in truth a wide-awake one, with a capacity for work that was looked upon as something phenomenal by the sleepy dreamers of Clover Hills.

Evelyn was by her sister's side in an instant, and seated herself on the arm of her chair.

"Elinore, what is it that causes these unhappy moods of yours, every time you return from a visit to Anna?" she inquired in a grieved tone. "Is it because the contrast is so great in the two homes, that you have become dissatisfied with your own?"

"I'm afraid you are right. Besides, you have no idea how irksome things have become to me of late, Evelyn. For a year past I have been sick of the very name of church. I just long to be free!—free to follow my own inclinations, without being continually held back by a thousand and one things in which I take no interest whatever."

A new thought suddenly occurred to Evelyn; as she listened and watched her sister closely, she wondered why she had been so blind.

"Elinore, I know what the trouble is. I see it all now—you are ill, and have been running down for some time."

"Yes, I know I am not well," choked Elinore, "but

you are too kind to make it the sole excuse for my present state of unhappiness. I'm ashamed to say it, but I acknowledge frankly that I have taken an utter distaste to all that makes up my life at Clover Hills."

"Of course, when one is ill, everything becomes distasteful that calls forth the slightest energy; the smallest duties become so magnified that they appear gigantic and absolutely beyond one's power to cope with. Look at father, for instance—how low-spirited he is, how utterly unable to take hold of any of his duties that require the least physical exertion—even his brain, you know, is totally unequal to thinking out a sermon. Each one that he works out now-a-days, he declares, will surely be the last."

At the mention of her father's name Elinore's face grew suddenly crimson with a blush of shame.

"Oh, I just feel like hiding my face from you all to talk as I did," she sobbed, "to think of my complaining, when I think of father, and all that you are doing!"

"Now Elinore, look here! You are painting yourself blacker than you deserve. I feel confident now that the whole trouble lies in the state of your health. I only regret that I did not notice it before. Something must be done; you need a rest. You are run down and out of sorts with yourself and the world in general. Come—let us plan how we can manage to send you away for awhile."

"Oh, you are awfully good, Evelyn! I deserve a good sound lecture instead of your kind words,"

sobbed Elinore. "You don't know what mean thoughts I have been harboring."

"Which never would have entered your brain had you been in good health," persisted Evelyn encouragingly. "Of course you may have had your head turned a little by the luxurious surroundings of Anna's home, but it is not the principal cause of this melancholy state of your spirits, and something must be done to give you an entire change of scene."

"I don't see how it can be managed. You know we haven't a penny to spare, and I can't go anywhere without money—unless I accept Anna's invitation to accompany them to Europe this summer. But of course that couldn't be considered for a moment."

"Did they really ask you to accompany them?" cried Evelyn exultantly, her eyes fairly dancing with pleasure.

"Yes, they gave me a most pressing invitation; told me they would not take no for an answer, but I refused positively to accept their offer."

"Elinore, write to them immediately, and tell them that on consideration you have decided to accept their kind invitation. There was no reason in the world why you should have refused; it is the very thing for you, too—a perfect godsend, and I am sure father and mother will give their consent."

"And leave you here a perfect slave, with all my work added to yours, while I, care-free for three months, lead a life of pleasure and ease? No, Evelyn—I couldn't!"

"Nonsense! Come now, and be reasonable," Evelyn entreated. "Whether you go or not, I intend at any rate to assume all your duties this summer; if there's no other way, you will have to take the rest-cure at home. I am physically equal to three times as much work as I am doing now, and you don't know, Elinore, what a pleasure it will be to me to know that you are having this delightful vacation abroad, which, I feel confident, will bring you around to your old self again. There's no backing out—you must take advantage of this unusual opportunity."

"You are too good to live!" cried Elinore, throwing her arms about her sister in her impulsive way. "You make me ashamed, you are so unselfish."

"Pshaw!" laughed Evelyn. "I don't see what I have done that is so extraordinarily unselfish! But do you know, I have something very important to consult you about? I will have to postpone it until we retire this evening; there's no time now."

"Does it concern me?" asked Elinore, brightening up considerably under the influence of her sister's cheerful and encouraging words, and the fact of her looking upon the trip abroad in such a favorable light.

"It concerns the whole family—but I won't say another word, so have patience until to-night."

That evening Frank Whitfield called. When his card was handed Evelyn, it caused her heart to beat a trifle quicker, though she knew not why; she hardly expected that he would call so soon again.

"Tell him I will be there in a few minutes, Betsy," said she.

At the time she was seated at her father's desk, taking down some thoughts as he dictated, in preparation for his next sermon. He had entirely recovered from the attack of neuralgia, but it had left him very weak.

"There is no hurry for this, my child," said he. "Besides I am able, I think, to write for a while myself."

"You can't go back on the rules mother and I have laid down, you know," laughed Evelyn, rising and stepping over to his chair. "Only one hour a day for writing, remember, until further notice. And you disobeyed, and went beyond that hour this morning," said she playfully, patting his head. "Like Elinore, you are in great need of a long rest, Father, and we are going to see that you get it, now that we have the other patient fixed."

The clergyman nodded, his face brightening up at her words, though he did not know then what they actually implied. He looked after her with fond eyes as she hurried off.

"I wonder if Mr. Whitfield really is as deeply interested in discussing religious matters as he appears," she thought, on her way to the parlor. "If so, I do wish I were able to be of some little help to him."

"You see, Miss Drayton, how eager I am to continue instructions," said he, in greeting. "But I do not want to intrude too much upon the time of

my instructor, which I know is very valuable at present."

"It is not quite so bad as that, Mr. Whitfield. I still have a few spare minutes. But don't call me an instructor; remember, I myself am only a learner, and can tell only of the discoveries I have made, and what they have done for me."

"I desire nothing better in the way of instruction than to hear of those discoveries; consequently, the term is most appropriate from my viewpoint," returned Whitfield. "Since I saw you last, Miss Drayton, I have been thinking that perhaps you do not know how serious I am in this matter. Religious subjects, as you remarked the other evening, are seldom discussed in the social life of to-day, and, in a sense, they do seem to be entirely out of place whenever mentioned. But, after all, I think it is principally owing to the amount of interest one takes in a subject, whether or not one is inclined to discuss it."

"And so few take a deep interest in religious subjects; devoting so little thought to them, that they are simply at sea when it comes to carrying on a discussion in these matters," said Evelyn. "The lack of interest is, I think, owing, in a great measure, to an ignorance of the Bible. If people would only give some thought to it, even from a literary or historical point of view, they would gradually come to a recognition of its spiritual value. Have you really, Mr. Whitfield, never given the Bible or spiritual matters any serious thought?"

"Never, I frankly acknowledge," returned the young man. "But, as I said before, I am now eager to learn something on a subject so inexcusably neglected. Strange, but since my breakdown in health, I have been taking a new view of life, Miss Drayton. I appear to be conscious of a part of me that has been neglected, starved; a something wanting, which, it seemed, could not be satisfied by anything this world could give. And the night you gave your little sermon, I was awakened for the first time to a realization of what that need was, and where I could find the remedy. I cannot explain just how it came about, but I knew that night it was the spiritual side of my nature, so long neglected, that was striving for recognition."

"And it was such a simple, unpretentious little talk," said Evelyn meditatively.

"Perhaps that was just the reason that it did appeal to me," spoke up Whitfield. "It is not always the scholarly discourse that awakens the conscience. It often happens, Miss Drayton, that one does good when he least expects it. I can't explain it, but all I know is, that so far as *I* am concerned, it was just the sermon for me."

While he spoke, Whitfield was attracted by a book lying on a table nearby, from the pages of which a corner of a lady's handkerchief protruded. He picked up the book, and glancing at the title, read aloud: "Origin of Species—Darwin. Are you reading this?" he asked.

"I am," answered Evelyn, her eyes twinkling.

with amusement, as Whitfield lifted the handkerchief tenderly and placed it upon the arm of his chair, as though handling something extremely fragile.

"I see you are more than half through," said he. "What do you think of his theory?"

"This is the second time I have read it, although in reality I did not do much more than skim through it some two years ago. I happened to pick it up the other day, and became interested, even though his ideas of evolution are repugnant to me. I am not capable of explaining it, but it seems impossible for me to believe that man has developed from lower animal forms, but that he was created divinely from the outset. The account of the Creation, in Genesis, more than satisfies my reason."

"Many scientists, you know, do not think of looking to the Bible for proofs. And yet, if they claim that man has a spiritual part in his make-up, I do not see how they can ignore the word of God," said Whitfield.

"Nor I, for the spiritual part of man is the part that to me is the most profound of all sciences, and a complete study of man could not be made without it," said Evelyn earnestly.

"I agree with you there, Miss Drayton, and we have every evidence of its being a most important part, by the manner in which man is influenced by it. What is it but this spiritual side that influences him to worship some one better, purer, and higher than himself?"

"Yes, in other words, it is the cry of the soul for its God," said Evelyn.

"It must be, or why should all races, even the most barbarous, have their own religion, their own gods to whom they must pray, and call on for protection? But to go back to Darwin.—He certainly does seem to prove very clearly that man is a production of evolutions going on for ages."

"He does, and yet there are many who also appear to prove, just as clearly, that the human race began in a high form of civilization. I have just recently read an excellent book on this subject, which is most interesting, and in direct contradiction to Darwin's theory. It proves by researches, and the opinions of many able thinkers, that man is man from the earliest period of his existence, and that there is no evidence that he has descended from, or is, or was, in any way especially related to any other organism in nature, through evolution or any other process. The writer agrees with many others, that the Darwinian theory of descent has not a single fact to confirm it in the realm of nature, and that all theories of evolution are not the result of scientific research, but purely the product of imagination; he believes, as many great thinkers do, to-day, that the human family began high up in civilized and social life, but afterward suffered a decadence."

"It would be difficult for me to be convinced of any truth in the evolution theory," said Whitfield. "And to my mind, one of the strongest proofs

against it, is the fact of there being no specimens discovered, showing the different stages during that long process from lower animal forms, to man as he is to-day.

"The first peoples of whom there is any account, were splendid types of humanity, and physically very powerful, and thousands of years ago, man did many things that are unknown to people of the present time. Many of our most noted scientists of to-day have not an atom of faith in Darwin, Spencer, and Fisk. And, after all, I do not believe any scientist is able to tell for a certainty how life began."

"Well, so far as I am personally concerned, it doesn't affect me vitally how man was created, that is, it does not affect my faith in Christianity," said Evelyn reflectively. "The creation of man is only one of the many mysteries which can be but the work of a divine being, and which no man may ever be able to solve satisfactorily. And after all, even the most learned scientists, you know, cannot tell us of things that are unseen; with all their wonderful knowledge, they can tell us nothing accurate concerning the spiritual world of which man is a part. Then too, science will not save a man; the scientific man must have a God as well as any other. I should think the scientific man would be the first to believe in God, because he is better able to see the marvelous evidences of a stupendous power, which even his own trained and superior intellect is not capable of grasping."

"You are right, Miss Drayton," said Whitfield, with growing interest and admiration for the young girl before him. "It does seem that many get farther from God as their intellects expand, and I often wonder why it is."

"I think it is because they have faith only in what they see, Mr. Whitfield, and because they are exclusively material scientists, losing sight of the spiritual, in other words, of the soul and its needs. I do really believe that there are many great minds waiting to have some mysteries made clear before they accept their God; and they will probably wait forever. Now with me, it is what I feel, more than what I know; to speak plainly—I mean so far as my faith is concerned—it seems to be that to which my soul responds, no matter what may be the opinions of scientists."

"I would give a great deal to possess your simple faith," said Whitfield.

At that moment the conversation was interrupted by the appearance of Elinore, with a roll of music, returning from the house of an invalid neighbor, for whom she had been playing the piano.

"Don't put your music away, Miss Elinore," said Whitfield, when she opened the door of the music cabinet, "I have never heard you play. Won't you give me the pleasure now?"

Elinore graciously complied, playing several selections.

He was surprised to find her an accomplished performer.

Later on he persuaded Evelyn to sing, and Elinore accompanied her. This was still more enjoyable. It was a springtime song, which wafted his fancies to some far-off land of enchantment, where perennial summer prevailed and where song-birds made the air melodious with their enchanting notes. While she sang, a sudden desire seized him to possess the handkerchief that still lay on the arm of his chair. He watched his chance and cautiously placed it in his pocket. He started as though let down from a great height when the last note died away. "Something is the matter with me. I never knew that I was capable of so much sentiment," thought he.

He was just about to take his leave when Evelyn said:

"By the way, do you know a young lady by the name of Adele Kingsley, who resides in New York, and is at present at the Elberon?"

Whitfield gave a little cough, and a queer look came into his eyes.

"Yes," he said. "The Kingsleys are old friends of the family. Have you met Miss Kingsley?"

"Yes, several times; also a friend of hers, to whom she introduced me one evening after services—a Miss Marie Anderson, from New York."

"Marie Anderson! Is she here also? How strange! I know her slightly. But I can't imagine why she should come here. They have a beautiful villa at Newport. And Miss Kingsley—" he added reflectively. "Why, I thought she was in London

by this time. I know she expected to go abroad with her parents."

"It was a very strange coincidence, I believe. Both young ladies were very much run down in health this spring, and it seemed to take a nervous form with them both. They decided to come to Clover Hills for a while, with the hopes of building up their health under its quieting, soothing influence," laughed Evelyn. "But they had no idea of each other's condition or intention of coming here, until they met at the hotel."

"It certainly was very strange, indeed," answered Whitfield, with a thoughtful knot between his brows. "Miss Kingsley appeared to be in the very best of health the last time I saw her. It must, indeed, have been a very sudden breakdown. Good-night, Miss Drayton—" extending his hand as they reached the door, for which they had started when this news was given. "We did not make much progress to-night, did we? But the interruption was such that I entertain no regrets whatever," he said, stepping back in the hall again. "The evening was a most enjoyable one. I shall look forward to my next lesson with the hopes of advancing another step on my way to perfection."

"I think I am the one who is advancing," said Evelyn. "I expect before long to be way up in science."

"Never under such an instructor as I!" declared he, bowing himself out.

CHAPTER IX.

On his way home, Whitfield fell into a deep muse.

"Adele Kingsley in Clover Hills, and attending church!" he thought. "There is something back of all this scheme of pretended piety. A well concocted story, this, of a nervous breakdown, and coming here to recuperate—nervous fiddle-sticks! I think I see her motive. Now why didn't she go to London as she intended, instead of forcing her presence upon me? If it were not for the friendly relations existing between the two families, I would nip this right in the bud, by ignoring her entirely."

There was no mistake about it, he was greatly disturbed by this piece of news. He had given a sigh of relief when he bade Adele Kingsley good-by, feeling secure, for a time at least, by being absolutely out of reach of her influence. And now, to hear suddenly that she is so near him, affected him in a very peculiar manner. It was like setting before you a rich and tempting dish, of which you were very fond, but was known to disagree with you to such an extent, that you endeavored in every way to overcome the desire for it.

It was a long while that night before he was able to close his eyes in sleep; not until he had succeeded in forming a satisfactory plan as to the attitude he would take toward Miss Kingsley.

The parting words of Evelyn on that Sunday evening came to his mind, and somehow they gave a stimulus, a fresh impetus, to his new resolutions. "When you once decide to take a step that is for your good, you will push ahead past all obstacles—I at least have that confidence in you."

He wondered why it was that so much that she said stayed with him; as did also so much of the little sermon she had given her father's people.

"I will push ahead in this!" he declared. "But little does she know of the obstacles a man of the world must surmount, of the danger and temptations with which he comes in daily contact."

It was a mysterious fascination that Adele Kingsley, wielded over him—one he himself failed to understand, and fought continually—forcing him, as it were, to seek her society like a moth to the flame. And yet he knew that it was not to his better self that she appealed; also that she did not meet his standard of the one whom he would be willing to call by the sacred name of wife. And for this reason he had fought the infatuation tooth and nail, and had so far succeeded in hiding it from her; but he never felt quite sure of himself in her presence. He lived in the one hope that the infatuation would gradually be overcome by reasonings with his better self. Strange it is that from time immemorial, good and worthy men have been captured by women who possess no other attraction than that of physical beauty, and who are far beneath them in intellect and character.

The following morning he sauntered off for a long tramp. His home being on the outskirts of the town, it did not take him long to reach the open country. He carried a book which he intended reading later on, in his favorite nook at the edge of the wood; but it was nearly two hours before he returned and settled himself for a little rest before continuing on to the house.

The air was fragrant with many delicious odors, a combination of wild blossoms, dew-moist earth, and mosses, mingled with pine and cedar. Nature's delicately stringed orchestra was performing its best—every instrument appeared to be in perfect harmony; the whispering breezes, the song-birds' inspiring notes, the piping of insects and the occasional drone of the bee, getting in her notes at the proper time. Now and then the drum came in with a few beats, in the croaking of a frog, while the little water-fall played a dreamy accompaniment to it all.

"Ah, this is solid comfort," thought Whitfield. "What a contrast to the past winter—" and he took off his hat and wiped his brow, which had become moist from exercise. He settled himself as comfortably as possible in a corner of the rustic seat under the wide-spreading trees, and quoted to himself:

"A book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me, singing in the Wilderness—"

"And how I wish it were possible for her to be

with me right now," he sighed. "I shall ask her some day to take a stroll here with me. We will sit on this very bench, and she shall teach me more of her religion, her philosophy, or whatever you might call it."

He placed his hand in one of the inside pockets of his coat, and brought out an envelope, in which was folded the handkerchief he had taken from the arm of the chair on the evening previous. He handled it almost reverently as he unfolded it and examined it, as one might something that was very rare and precious. There was just one letter embroidered in a corner, and at this he gazed long and earnestly. The letter E held a strange fascination for him now-a-days, especially the one on this small piece of sheer linen. Finally he raised the handkerchief to his nose, and drew in several deep inhalations. "I wonder what that scent is," he mused, "it has a suspicion of lavender, and yet it is not that exactly, either. I have often noticed it about her; it has a strange effect on me," pressing it closer to his nose. Suddenly his face broadened into a smile—"Well—" he sighed, as he placed the handkerchief in the envelope again, "I never imagined, Frank Whitfield, that it was possible for you to be so silly."

The book lay on the bench beside him; he had no inclination to open it, but gave himself up to meditations concerning this particular young lady, who appeared to hold him with a new charm this spring—an indescribable something which was un-

consciously drawing him nearer to her every day with very strong cords. His reveries, however, were of very short duration. They were interrupted in a most unexpected way.

A rustling and a snapping of twigs startled him, and turning quickly, he saw Adele Kingsley coming toward him.

"Frank Whitfield!" exclaimed she, "this is, indeed, a surprise—" extending her hand in a manner most cordial.

Whitfield was on his feet in an instant.

"I am the one to express surprise," he said. "I thought you were in London these two weeks or more—I did, however, learn last evening, through Miss Drayton, that you were in Clover Hills."

"Come, let us sit down over there on that big moss-covered stone near the water," suggested she, "and I will tell you all about it—" suddenly assuming a languid air as she spoke.

"You see, it all came about in this way. I was suddenly conscious one day of a great weakness, accompanied by very peculiar symptoms, which I soon discovered were indications of a nervous breakdown; and the specialist I consulted declared that the only remedy he could prescribe, that would be of any benefit, was a long rest-cure, free entirely from all excitement, and suggested Clover Hills as a very suitable place. That is the whole story in a nutshell."

She clasped her hands, sighed, and looked dreamily over the creek into the denseness of the trees and shrubbery.

Whitfield nodded, and gave her a searching look.

"My condition is something I do not care generally to talk about, Frank," she began after a pause. "But as you are such an old friend I will make an exception in your case."

"Thank you! I am sure I shall be very much interested," he said, with grim politeness.

"Well, to begin with, I think I had for some time been running down, but did not realize it; consequently I was totally unequal to the extra demands made upon me during the latter part of the winter. But I kept right on, as you know, until the season ended, when there was a reaction, and I suddenly collapsed."

"That was too bad," spoke up Whitfield, knitting his brows thoughtfully.

Adele flashed a questioning look toward him. There was something in his manner that puzzled her.

"Every clear day I take a long walk, and sleep several hours, as the doctor directed," she sighed, turning her eyes again toward the opposite shore. "The walk through these woods is my favorite one," she added dreamily.

"How strange!" said he, with a sudden drop of the eyes to hide the merriment in them. "I should imagine that you would prefer the beaten path to the one of quiet seclusion."

Adele twisted herself around and faced him squarely.

"What do you mean to insinuate?" snapped she,

"that you think I am totally incapable of appreciating the beauties of nature?"

"To tell the truth, I do," returned he quietly. "But the love for nature is one that can be acquired, and you could not choose a walk that would be a more charming one to begin with, than to follow Maple Avenue to the woods, and continue on through the tangled pathway on *this* side of the creek—" lowering his eyes again to hide the humor in them. For the grounds of "Idlewild" extended down to that side of the creek.

Adele tapped her foot nervously on the stone.

"I come here frequently with a book," he began again, after a short silence. "But sometimes I do not even open it, such a pleasure is it to simply lean back and let my fancy play—" cautiously raising his head and watching her with a keen interest. "Yes, Adele, you are wise in selecting Clover Hills, where a splendid opportunity can be had for Nature to administer her soothing remedies—"

Adele turned sharply. A look of haughty wonder swept across her face.

"You seem to have grown very poetical all of a sudden!" she said, biting her lip. She thought she detected a hidden sarcasm in his words and manner. Could it be that he doubted her reasons for coming to Clover Hills? "I must control myself!" she soliloquized. "My nerves are in truth getting the better of me."

Whitfield did not meet her gaze this time, though he felt her eyes upon him; he kept his own bent

on the ground, and toyed with some withered leaves.

"You may never have imagined it, Adele," he said calmly, not in the least ruffled, it appeared, by the agitation he knew she was making every effort to hide—"but I have always been a lover of Nature, and this one particular spot has appealed to me very strongly. When one spends his time, for months at a stretch, in a city like New York, without a change of scene, every moment taken up in a strenuous routine, what chances are there to give attention to the finer instincts of one's nature? It is only when I come to Clover Hills that I am renewing acquaintance with my better-self."

"Ah! that implies when he is under the spell of Evelyn Drayton's influence!" thought Adele, throwing him a searching glance.

"Yes," she sighed, a new idea presenting itself—to enter heartily into the spirit of any subject he may offer. "It has frequently occurred to me how empty are the lives of those living in the fashionable world, and, as you say, how prone we are to lose sight of all that is best in our natures, when there is no opportunity for reflection, for inspiration, as one can find, for instance, in a place like this."

"There is something about Nature that holds one," said Whitfield wistfully, as though communing with himself. "Though all mankind passes into oblivion in time, Nature remains still alive, ever ready to inspire, to uplift those who are able to appreciate and feel its influence."

"Frank, I believe you are developing into a poet!" Adele spoke up, throwing her head back with a queer little laugh. "If you continue at this rate, you will have to give up law. By the way, you haven't explained to me why you think I would prefer the beaten path rather than the charmingly romantic one through the woods?" she inquired, with an effort to be gay.

"I suppose it is because I have never seen you in any other sphere but that of city life; consequently I could not imagine you in surroundings such as these, and taking pleasure in solitary wanderings along secluded pathways."

He was reclining on the rock, with his elbow pressed firmly upon it, and his cheek in the palm of his hand. He drew his head down lower while he spoke, and dug vigorously at some tufts of moss with his penknife. Adele's nostrils dilated, and her breathing came short and fast, casting furtive glances about her, as though seeking an appropriate answer from the trees and shrubbery.

"H'm-m!" said she. "You are not as good a reader of character as I thought, if you think I am nothing better than a mere worldling!"

"Please don't misconstrue my remark, Adele!" said he, with dignified politeness. "Surely you might say the same of me, which would be perfectly natural, for have we not seen each other only in the city's whirl?"

Adele made no reply. Her face was a study.

"Do you know, Adele," he went on gravely, "I

have been thinking very seriously this spring of the social life of to-day—that is, the social life as you and I know it, the fashionable world and its emptiness. What compensation is there in it all for the wear and tear on one's body and soul? My ill-health has been of some good, at any rate, for it has caused me to stop and think. And do you know—with the exception of ourselves, of course!" laughed he—"I have discovered that the best people are not in society."

"He has come to that conclusion since his acquaintance with Evelyn Drayton!" thought Adele, with a masterful effort to keep her jealous feelings from being detected.

"That is the truth!" said she, looking down the creek meditatively. "What does it all amount to in the end?—and how empty does it appear, as you say, when one is suddenly lifted out of the whirlpool and placed in a quiet spot like this, and able to look back upon it all. It is quite evident, Frank"—jocundly—"that a fashionable society woman is one that does not correspond with your ideal."

"That's a fact! Not an exclusively fashionable one, at any rate"—said he, elongating his face, and turning his attention to the moss again.

"Do you know," said she, with an angry flash of her dark eyes—"I am beginning to think you are a woman-hater."

"You are mistaken, Adele! I'm a great admirer of the sex, but I am very fastidious, and not easily ensnared."

"Oh!" she faltered, tapping her foot and gazing toward the opposite bank again in deep reflection, while Whitfield cut away vigorously at a fresh tuft of moss.

"This is getting to be unbearable!" thought Adele, her jealous rage increasing with every minute. "Time is passing, and also will the opportunity to find out more in regard to his opinion of Evelyn Drayton. Oh, if I could only keep down this excitement—my nerves run riot at the very mention of her name!"

Controlling herself by another great effort of her will, she turned toward him quickly, her face now animated as though with some sudden, happy thought. "By the way," she said, "I forgot to tell you that I happened to step into the church one evening, and heard Miss Drayton preach a little sermon. It was an unexpected treat, I tell you. I suppose you have heard about it, because it was the talk of the town for several days."

"I'm glad to say I also had the pleasure of hearing her that evening, Adele."

"Is that so? Since when have you turned Presbyterian?"

"Since coming to Clover Hills," replied he, drawing down the corners of his mouth to keep them from trembling.

Adele felt the hot blood rush to her face again at this answer. Every remark he made seemed to stir afresh the raging torrent of jealousy which she endeavored to hold back. "Of course," she

thought, "he has turned Presbyterian since the church here holds such an attraction."

"I think Miss Drayton is a most unusual young woman," she ventured, after a struggle for control.

"She certainly is," declared he, "and a charming one at that—so childlike in her simplicity, yet every inch a woman."

His nose almost touched the ground in his efforts to hide his face.

"She is, I acknowledge, a rare type, Frank, and so good—"

"Good!" cried he. "That is not the word—she is angelic!"

He looked up, cautiously, and saw at a glance her flushed face and heaving chest.

"As I thought, she is jealous of Evelyn Drayton, and has come here on a voyage of discovery. I will give her all that she wants to satisfy her curiosity," thought he. "I'm ready—go ahead!"

But Adele did not speak; she sat silent, in deep study.

"She moves on far too high a plane for a mortal such as I am, who is not even worthy of untying the latchet of her shoe," he went on.

She awoke at this. Her heart beat with fresh hopes.

"I agree with you, Frank!" said she. "Of course, you are an exemplary fellow, as every one knows, but I imagine that Miss Drayton's choice of close friends must be only those who are deeply religious."

Whitfield could not keep back the smile this remark created; his whole body, in fact, was trembling with suppressed humor. He lowered his head and started on another piece of moss with renewed vigor, until he had controlled the great desire to laugh; then he said with an earnestness and solemnity, that left no doubt in Adele's mind of his sincerity:

"It is possible, though, for even the worst of sinners to repent, and rise to the level of the righteous."

Adele's will-power had reached its limit, her patience its end. She felt assured that it would be impossible to restrain the pent-up emotion, if this conversation continued a moment longer.

With this thought, she suddenly rose to her feet. "I must be going," she said. "I know it is near one o'clock, and I take my lunch at half past."

"I will walk to the cars with you," said he, rising with her. "I suppose you do not intend to walk back."

"No, one way is just about as much as I am equal to," said she, "but I am increasing the distance every day, as the doctor advised."

"A capital idea," said he, "if you keep this thing up, before very long you will become quite a pedestrian."

"Frank, you are not at all like yourself this morning. I don't understand you," said she, with an effort to keep calm.

"Oh, come now, Adele, don't be foolish; your

nervous condition no doubt, causes you to imagine that. Strange," he laughed, "but I was thinking the same of you."

She made no answer to this, but walked on, staring straight ahead. In a few minutes they had left the woods and entered Maple Avenue on their way to the car line. For some moments they continued on in silence, each busy with many confusing thoughts, brought about by the conversation in the woods.

"Look!—isn't that Evelyn Drayton and Alfred Scott?" exclaimed Adele suddenly.

Whitfield started.

"It certainly is!" he said—both gazing intently at the pair driving toward them in a carriage.

The next instant there was an exchange of bows, and the carriage passed on.

Adele was quick to discern the start that Whitfield gave when she called his attention to the couple, and the sudden light that came into his face, together with the extremely gracious bow that he gave Evelyn.

"No, I never remember his bowing to me just like that!" thought she, her face burning with anger and jealousy.

"Wonders will never cease!" she gasped. "Now if that isn't a surprise—Alfred Scott driving with the clergyman's daughter! I never imagined that his taste, above all others, could possibly run in that direction."

"He never displayed better," spoke up Whitfield, turning his head away to hide a smile.

Adele bit her lip. Her nerves began to grow tense again.

"That may be, in one sense of the word!" she spoke up sharply. "Nevertheless you know as well as I do, Frank Whitfield, that Evelyn Drayton is a girl entirely different from those with whom he has been accustomed to associate; consequently it is not so remarkable that I should express surprise. Why, they can hardly have a thought in common, guiding her life, as she evidently does, by such high principles."

"I differ with you, Adele," he contradicted. "In the first place, the so-called society man of the world is not always without high principles and ideals, though true it is, he may rarely live up to them, or even make the effort. But it doesn't necessarily follow that he is not capable of admiring those who do, and such specimens of womanhood as Evelyn Drayton—who could help but be influenced by the charm of her personality? Haven't you acknowledged as much, even on your short acquaintance with her?"

He drew down the corners of his mouth, and glanced at Adele to note the effect of his words; but as she turned her eyes toward him with a flash, he knit his brows and looked ahead thoughtfully.

"What a champion you are of this young lady! She has certainly won her way into your good graces," said she, with a nervous laugh and an attempt at a little playful teasing to hide her agitation.

"Indeed I am," returned he. "Knowing her, one could be nothing else," and he drew down his upper lip and pressed his teeth firmly against it, as he looked the other way.

"Sphinx! I will penetrate your mask yet!" thought she, with an indignant throw of her head, conscious again of that indefinable mystery about him.

"No doubt your mother will expect to see me at 'Idlewild,'" she said, after a long silence, "but at present I am not making any calls. Perhaps later on I shall take a run over." Whitfield nodded, and pressed his teeth more firmly against his lips.

He saw her safely on the car, then turned his steps rapidly toward home.

"It was a shame to torment her as I did," he thought, "but I have hit upon the right thing, I feel sure now, to kill this infatuation of hers, while I continue to fight my own. What a weak creature is man, after all, that he can be so ensnared by one lacking in all the attributes for which his better-self really longs. Strange, strange!" he sighed. "With all her faults and weaknesses, she attracts me in some mysterious way, and I really pitied her to-day; and yet it must not be—it cannot be!"

CHAPTER X.

When Evelyn joined her sister in their bedroom, the night she promised to acquaint her with the long-kept secret, she found her in her kimono and slippers, patiently waiting to hear it.

"I'm afraid it is not going to meet with favor in your eyes, after our conversation this afternoon, Elinore," said she.

"Try me; I'm never going to be naughty again!" laughed Elinore. "I wasn't myself this afternoon. Quick! I am just dying with curiosity—I cannot bear the suspense any longer."

"Well, it is all about an idea of mine that I have, for a long while been trying to carry out," Evelyn began, drawing a chair close up to her sister's. "First and most important of all, I want father to send in his resignation to the church, and—"

"Evelyn! You are joking!" interrupted Elinore with a gasp, and staring bewildered into the bright face opposite her.

"I was never more in earnest in my life. I feel that the time has come now when something must be done to save father from a complete physical collapse, and there is only one remedy—to give up preaching for a year at least. Besides, I feel that it would be advantageous for the church to make a change."

"How can you say that, Sister Evelyn, when

you know how the people adore him, and what a good pastor he makes? Why, they would not hear to it, I'm sure."

"Evidently you have not had your eyes open, or you could not have helped seeing the growing dissatisfaction in the church. They have tried to hide it, on account of their sympathy and love for father. But as a preacher, he is to-day totally unfit, and they will not be able to hide much longer from him their eagerness for a new pastor, who is vigorous and strong. We cannot expect the congregation to feel just as we do, you know, Elinore. Father's defective delivery has been such a gradual thing that we have become accustomed to it, and have not realized just what the struggle has been for him; but I know now that this tax on his throat is fast undermining his whole constitution."

"What do you propose doing, if he did resign? You know that we have practically nothing outside of his salary. Why, we would be beggars!"

"Now, don't be pessimistic until you hear me out. I have provided for the emergency; that is, if you are willing to assist me."

Elinore laughed.

"Help you!" exclaimed she. "Do you actually think that you and I could support a family of this size?"

"Splendidly!"

"Oh, Evelyn!"

"Listen! I have kept all my plans a secret for

that very reason. I knew that the scheme would only meet with disfavor unless every obstacle was removed, and I would be able to prove that it could be put into operation satisfactorily. I have an offer of a position as a teacher of English in a private school for girls in Philadelphia, to which I must give an answer in a few days. And our old friend, Professor Steinmetz, told me he would give you as many scholars as you could take, in his conservatory, which you know, is also in Philadelphia. Then you—"

"Oh, Evelyn! But—"

"Wait, please.—Then mother's house in Philadelphia being without a tenant for some months, as you are aware, my idea is to occupy it, and you and I support the family for a year. I have figured it all out, and I find that with great economy we could manage very well, indeed. You know Dr. Evans, the specialist, said several times that all father required to restore his throat was a long rest. Oh, yes! and another thing—Professor Steinmetz has also informed me that he knows of a vacancy in a choir that I could fill, if I will let him know soon. So you see everything is ready to make the change, if we can only get father's and mother's consent."

"But suppose one or both of us should be taken ill—what then?"

"Nonsense!" said Evelyn, bursting into a merry peal of laughter at the distress pictured in Elinore's face. "If people would always stop for 'supposes,'

there would never be anything accomplished in this world. You know the old adage—"Nothing ventured, nothing gained." "

"Oh, of course I want to help you," said Elinore, settling back in the chair with an air of forced resignation. "But do you know, I dislike awfully the idea of going out as a wage-earner. Then, too—" reflectively—"I'm afraid Anna might not care to associate with me any more."

"I am surprised, Elinore! Have you no higher opinion of Anna than that? I, at least, give her the credit of being above such a thing. If she wasn't, her friendship would not be worth retaining."

"There's one thing about it, at any rate," said Elinore, throwing back her head proudly. "I can boast of better family connections, anyway, so that will even up things."

"Oh, come now!—don't be so foolish, Elinore! Aristocratic connections will not bring us bread and butter, and that is the principal question at stake with us. Now all I want to know is—are you willing to do your part?"

"Certainly, Sister Evelyn. I wouldn't upset your scheme for anything, especially after so kindly making it possible for me to take that trip. I will henceforth be your willing slave, so count on me to do my best. Command me, fair Queen—I live only to do thy bidding—" playfully kneeling before her sister in humble submission.

"I knew you would come around all right!"

laughed Evelyn. "And just think what it will mean to father. Really, I am so enthusiastic about it, I can hardly wait until next fall. I feel like starting in right now."

When the great plan was laid before the minister and his wife, there were tears in the eyes of both when Evelyn finished.

"My dear child," the clergyman said huskily—"this is, indeed, a surprise, and I appreciate your thoughtfulness and kindness more than I can express. But I feel that the responsibility is too much for two such young shoulders to bear—"

"Now, Father, don't say that!" pleaded Evelyn. "Can't you see how much easier it is than anything else we could possibly do?—and it's only for a year, you know. Besides, I do not think it will be as hard on either of us as the demands made upon us here. Please say yes, for your own health's sake, if for nothing else."

"Evelyn, you can hardly expect us to decide on such a question at once," said Mrs. Drayton, when her husband hesitated in answering. "You have been several months considering it, so you must give us a little time to think it over."

"Yes, give us a day or two," suggested her father.

"Certainly," said Evelyn. "No longer, though, as I must decide positively in regard to the positions by the first of next week."

"You have been mistaken, Evelyn, in thinking that the dissatisfaction in the church was not noticed

by me nor your mother. We have both seen it for some time past," said the clergyman, his voice trembling with emotion, "and we have been planning too, your mother and I, but so far have not been able to decide on anything satisfactory. I realize the situation fully, and that I am physically incapable of occupying the pulpit any longer. I have even been forced to give up writing for the papers, as you know. My brain refuses to act; it appears to be unequal to any concentrated thought. And I do agree with you in one respect at least—that something must be done, and a rest is the only remedy that will restore me to health."

"Then why not give your consent to our giving you this rest, Father, dear? We can do it so easily," Evelyn entreated, stepping over to his chair and placing her arm about his neck. "It will give me the greatest joy of my life to do this for you. And just think! everything is arranged, in so far as the wherewithal is concerned. Just one word, Father, and the whole thing is settled. I have figured it all out—everything!" coaxed she, her face aglow with happiness in the prospect of soon winning them both over. "Five hundred a year for the choir position alone, remember!" she continued enthusiastically, "and six for the school position, to say nothing of what Elinore might earn. Why, there can't be any struggle to get along on an income like that, with no rent to pay. And the taxes don't amount to much—they have to be paid anyway."

"You know, Father, Evelyn has never yet undertaken anything that didn't turn out all right," spoke up Elinore, who had been gradually warming up under the inspiration of Evelyn's optimistic temperament, and beginning to enter into the spirit of the plan with a zest that was a surprise to Evelyn.

"Well, what do you say, Mary?" inquired the clergyman. "We might as well settle it now, after all. Shall we allow the girls to have their way?"—turning now a smiling face toward his wife. He, too, was beginning to catch the infection of Evelyn's spirits; the scheme appeared more favorable the longer he thought of it.

"Evelyn, you have placed us between two fires now," laughed Mrs. Drayton. "For your father to delay any longer sending in his resignation means nothing short of a calamity, and to refuse to give our consent to this plan of yours would, I feel, be a still greater one."

"You're right!" declared the minister, in the midst of the laughter this created. "She has us cornered, that's a fact; there's no help for us."

"And both calamities can be so easily avoided," said Evelyn, who was now at her mother's side, on whose word she readily saw it all depended.

"There is only the one thing for me to do, now," said she. "I couldn't refuse after what your father said. And if things come to the worst, we will take boarders."

"Agreed!" cried Evelyn, clapping her hands. "I'm sure we could run a first-class boarding house!

But I don't anticipate the least apprehension of failure in any way. You have made me the happiest girl in the world to-day, and I feel quite confident that neither of you will ever regret it—and then it's only for a year!"

Later on, that morning, when Evelyn was about to enter the house on her return from an errand, Alfred Scott drove up, and asked her to take a drive. She knew of nothing particularly urgent that required her attention just then, so she accepted the invitation, telling Betsy, who stood at the door, to inform her mother. The next minute she was in the carriage, and off, forgetting all her cares in the child-like delight she took in the unexpected little treat.

She laughed and chatted away with her companion in the merriest of humors. The whole world appeared to take on a rosier hue since that great plan of hers had finally been launched so successfully. She kept nodding toward one side of the road, then the other, as she passed through the town, for nearly everyone knew Sister Evelyn. Children called after her repeatedly, and waved their handkerchiefs, several of them throwing her kisses, which she always returned, smiling and nodding back at them.

It amused Scott, it was so unlike the drives he had been accustomed to taking with young ladies of the fashionable world. There was something so unaffected, so natural, about the young girl at his side, that it was a treat to watch her and be with her.

Ever since the summer previous, Evelyn had been very much in his thoughts, although he had seen her only about a half-dozen times, making very few and short visits to Clover Hills that summer. But he could not forget her when he returned to the city. She remained in his memory like some sweet song that had touched the heart-strings, making it yearn to hear it again. Toward Christmas the desire to see her became so great, that he took a run up to Clover Hills, and repeated the trip several times.

They had not gone very far when they met Whitfield and Adele.

"I believe that is going to be a match," remarked Scott.

"Do you really think so?" asked Evelyn in surprise.

"I hear he has been paying attention to Adele Kingsley for some time."

"How strange! Why, he didn't know that she was in Clover Hills until I told him."

"He didn't! Then, perhaps, there is no truth in the report. I thought of course that accounted for her presence here. I could conceive of no other reason for her coming to such a quiet place as Clover Hills."

"It was for that very quietness that she *did* come. She has had a nervous breakdown, and was ordered here by her physician. She appears to be very much interested in the church, too; comes to nearly all the services," said Evelyn.

"She does!" shouted Scott, throwing back his

head in a sudden roar of laughter. "Is the millenium coming? I thought the days of miracles had passed. Adele Kingsley going to church regularly! I can scarcely believe it!" he ejaculated, with another outburst of laughter. "But I have an idea!" with a sudden check to his hilarity, turning toward Evelyn. "Was she present the evening you took your father's place in the pulpit?"

"She was."

"Then I'm not surprised, after all, for even such a wicked sinner as I came very near being converted that night, and there's no telling what it may do yet. No, I'm not joking—" meeting Evelyn's doubting look, mingled with suppressed merriment. "I'm not very susceptible to religious pleadings, I acknowledge, but your little sermon did appeal to me, Miss Drayton, and I have been anxious ever since to tell you so, and to congratulate you on your great success that evening."

"Thank you. I am very glad indeed that my talk should have been so appreciated, Mr. Scott."

"It was appreciated, Miss Drayton. Why, your great earnestness roused even me! I had to listen whether I wanted to or not. It was your earnestness that gave to each word the power to penetrate, and bring forth some response from the hardest heart. I feel sure that there was no one present who did not long, that night, 'to go on unto perfection,'—even including such worldlings as Miss Kingsley and myself."

"The more hopeless the sinner, the greater credit

to myself if I succeeded in bringing about a turning-point in his life," laughed Evelyn. "But I forgot to tell you that a friend of Miss Kingsley is also at the hotel—a Miss Marie Anderson, from New York. Do you know her?"

If a thunder-bolt had suddenly fallen from the clear blue sky overhead Scott could not have been more surprised. He collected himself immediately, however, and succeeded in hiding the momentary agitation from his companion.

"Yes, I know her," replied he, twisting himself around now and facing Evelyn squarely. "Well, well!" he laughed. "I suppose she, too, has come to Clover Hills to recuperate from a nervous breakdown."

"That is just exactly what she has done! And wasn't it strange that she should have met Miss Kingsley at the same hotel, with the same trouble, neither of them knowing of the other's condition or intention of coming to Clover Hills?"

"Wonderfully strange and queer—a remarkable coincidence," declared Scott, his black eyes snapping in a peculiar manner which puzzled Evelyn. There appeared to be something very mysterious in regard to these two young women.

"Now I wonder what it could have been that attracted those gay butterflies to this spot?" he said, looking over the horse's head with something like a scowl.

"What! do you doubt their word?" Evelyn cried in playful rebuke.

Scott laughed outright; then he suddenly grew serious, and turning toward Evelyn, met her blue eyes upturned to his as though searching for a satisfactory solution to his innuendoes.

"Oh, I make my most humble apology to both the young ladies!" he said. "You see, Miss Drayton, I have a great fault of judging too hastily, jumping too quickly at conclusions, as it were. It's a fault that I must overcome, if I intend to follow the advice you gave that Sunday evening and endeavor—to go on to perfection.' "

"Indeed, you must!" affirmed Evelyn, not troubling herself to probe any deeper into the subject, as he evidently did not desire to discuss these young ladies any further.

She turned her eyes toward the woods they were just passing, and took in long draughts of the fresh pure air, fragrant with pine and cedar, together with the scent of wild honeysuckle that here and there sprang up in tangled clusters along the roadside.

"Oh, isn't this delicious!" cried she in childlike ecstasy. "I often wonder—" with a wistful look coming into her eyes—"if everyone loves the country as I do. You cannot imagine what a treat this is to me, Mr. Scott, for I have been so busy this spring, I have had few opportunities of getting out into the open country. It's all so beautiful, so refreshing, and restful! Hark! there's a woodpecker. Did you ever see one at work?"

"Occasionally," returned Scott.

"See the water through the trees. Have you ever followed the path along the creek through these woods? It gives me a new inspiration every time I take it."

"I'm not very fond of strolling off alone in secluded places," answered he. "Now it would be a different matter if I had a pleasant companion—" with a sidelong glance at Evelyn, which she did not notice. Her eyes were turned in the opposite direction, sweeping over the fields and meadows to a series of wooded hills in the distance, that rose and fell in waves of changing verdure.

"Of course," said she, "it is pleasanter to have company on such rambles, and yet—"

She paused for an instant, and a little sigh escaped her. "To be occasionally alone with nature, beyond the sound of human voices, is a keen pleasure to me. I suppose for the very reason that I so rarely have an opportunity of being entirely alone. You see, I am surrounded by people continually, and my life is one of almost constant activity, except when sleeping—" with a playful glance of her eyes.

"I always understood that you preferred an active life," said Scott, rather surprised at her words.

"So I do!" she spoke up quickly, as though startled by his remark. "You misunderstood me. I would not desire to live any other. Why, I wouldn't give up what I am doing now, and what I expect to do next fall, were the most luxurious life that could be had, offered me in exchange. It was only that I would so enjoy an occasional lull,

to give my thoughts full play in some quiet green cool spot, with no fear of interruption."

"I wish it were in my power to grant you that desire, Miss Drayton—" said he, regretting his inability to see as much of her as he desired, and that the drive had to be cut short on account of her early dinner hour. "Couldn't you manage in some way to take just an hour off every clear day, and take a stroll or a drive with me? I am a man of leisure now, you know, and any time that you mention will be convenient for me."

"Thank you ever so much, but I can make no promises. You see, things are so uncertain at a minister's house, one never knows what a day will bring forth. I am not always so tied down as I am this spring, but my father's ill health has given us all much more to do. We are obliged to relieve him and assist him as much as possible."

"I suppose then I will have to take my chances like all the rest," said Scott, as they drove up to the door.

"I cannot tell you how much I have enjoyed this unexpected little treat, Mr. Scott. It has done me a world of good," said she, as he helped her out. And he knew that she meant it, only he did not feel sure that the treat was owing to any special pleasure she took in his company.

CHAPTER XI.

As Scott drove off, Evelyn opened the gate and ran up the yard, swinging her hat like a girl of twelve.

"Well, honey, did yo' enjoy yo' kerridge-ride wid de gen'l'man?" asked Betsy, when Evelyn appeared at the kitchen door.

"I should say I did. I haven't had such a treat for a long while, and it has given me a ravenous appetite. How good the dinner smells."

"I 'specs it does, chile, after such an airin', an' I'se gwine t' hurry it up fo' yo' as fast as I can. Yo' sut'ny look berry happy dis mornin', Miss Ev'lyn. I'se almos' suspectionate dat yo're mighty fond ob dat gay city gen'l'man. Does yo' knows anything 'bout his fambly?"

"Now, Mammy, dear," said Evelyn, with a mischievous twinkle, and shaking a playful finger. "You must not give yourself so much concern about my gentlemen friends. You can't expect me to hunt up the pedigree of them all. If a man pleases me, I don't care a fig who his great-grandfather was. Hear, Mammy?—not a fig!"

The horror depicted on Betsy's face at these words caused Evelyn to burst into a peal of laughter.

"Foh de Lawd, honey!" gasped Betsy with a funny little sniff. "I'se mos' 'stracted wid tryin' t' make yo' understan' me on dis subjec'. But yo're only

jokin' wid me, after all, ain't yo', chile?—'caze yo'd nurver bring down yo're old mammy's grey hairs wid sorrow t'de grave, by marryin' yo'se'f in some low-down fambly."

"Of course not!" Evelyn returned with a drawl, though her eyes sparkled with the keen enjoyment she took in it all. "Betsy, before I decide on a husband, I intend first of all to see whether he meets with your full approval. So there now!—give yourself no further anxiety in the matter!"

Betsy stood as serious as a judge, watching the vegetables cooking, and Evelyn stepped up, and laying both hands on her shoulders, she stretched her neck around, and peeped into the old negro's face, like some saucy, mischievous child. "Does that meet with the approbation of your royal highness?"

"Go 'long—yo're teasin' yo' ole mammy!" said she, with a shrug, shaking with suppressed laughter, and making a spring toward the young girl.

Evelyn started on a run for the stairs, with Betsy after her, calling back:

"Not this time—not this time, Betsy!"

Then suddenly she started to sing:

"Daisies, daisies, fresh with morning dew—
Please buy a bunch, Miss,
They were picked for you."

All the way up to the sewing-room on the third floor she traveled, and swept her mother, Elinore, and Dorothy a low, graceful curtsy at the door; then burst into merry laughter, in which they all

joined, for the humorous side of the situation was instantly seen and appreciated by them all.

The three plodding away with their needles as though their very lives depended on it, while Evelyn, apparently the gay butterfly of the family, had shirked all cares and run off to enjoy herself.

"Poor little Dorothy!" she said. "They even had to call on you for assistance, didn't they?—while your eldest sister disregarded her duties, to drive along the cool shady road, happy as a bird."

"Oh, I don't mind, Sister Evelyn!" spoke up Dorothy sweetly. "We were so glad that you were having a good time."

"Yes—we think you deserve to be care-free once. You have been too closely tied down this spring for your good, my dear," said Mrs. Drayton.

"So there now! Don't give yourself any conscience pricks!" laughed Elinore.

At that moment dinner was announced.

In the afternoon, one of the parishioners took the clergyman and his wife out for a drive. Elinore joined a party of young people for a row on the creek, and the three younger children started off in high glee to a birthday party of one of their little friends. Evelyn was left entirely alone. She had insisted on taking her turn at the pile of sewing that had to be finished that week.

She sewed steadily until five o'clock, congratulating herself on her good fortune in not having one interruption, which was a very unusual thing, there being, as a rule, many callers, and frequent unex-

pected demands made upon them at all hours. The time passed very rapidly; so busy was she with her thoughts that she did not notice its flight. Every fiber of her being seemed to thrill at the prospect of the coming winter, and what she hoped the consummation of her plans would bring to her father. Now and then her face would light up, and the blue eyes gleam with the happiness it gave her to think about it all.

She was about to fold up her sewing for the day when Betsy appeared in the doorway, breathing like a porpoise.

"I declah, honey," she panted, "it's mos' s'prisin' how dem church folks call on yo' on eb'ry 'casion. I 'clar t' goodness, I'se cum berry near turnin' dat chile outen de do'."

"Betsy, you ought to be ashamed!" said Evelyn reprovingly. "What does the child want?"

"I doan know—he jes' tole me all 'cited laik, while de tears drap off his cheeks, dat he was in berry great troubles—de same ole story!"—she sighed—"an' must see yo' dis berry minute. Lan' sakes, chile, I'se says to him—"I 'specs yo' peoples ob de church take Miss Evelyn fo' a centipede wid a t'ousand legs, t' be ready t' run at yo' beck an' call eb'ry minute ob de day!"

"I never thought you would speak so to any one in trouble, and especially to a little child," said Evelyn, with a great effort to keep from laughing, and to show only her displeasure.

"I jes' couldn't help it. Yo' knows yo'se'f, chile,

how dey're al'ays bodderin' yo' wid deah trib'lations, 'stid ob fighten deah battles out wid de Lawd, who nebber has to bodder 'bout His health. Why doan yo' 'press on deah minds de teachin's ob de Scriptures dat says:

"'De Lawd is my refuge an' strength,
A berry present help in trouble.
Deahfo' need not we fear
Tho' de earth be removed,
Tho' de mountains be kerried into de midst ob de sea!'"

Her voice rose higher and higher in her excitement, until toward the last, it reached a pitch so shrill, it could be heard all over the house. Her great dark eyes flashed, and she gesticulated wildly during the whole recitation.

Evelyn could see her plainly through the glass, before which she was standing, and hurriedly straightening up her hair. The whole picture was such an amusing one it was almost more than she could do to keep from laughing. In her efforts to suppress it, she could not speak, or interrupt her, though she felt sure the child below in the hall must have heard her.

She moved toward the stairs, with a pained look, dignified and still silent. Betsy stepped aside, and stared at her young mistress with a sudden change of countenance. But Evelyn passed right on like some outraged queen, and hurried down the stairs.

"Now I'se jes' gwine an' hurt dat pore chile's feelin's!" thought Betsy. "But lan' sakes! some-

body's got t' give de warnin' word, or she'll wear herse'f out t' de bone!"

In the lower hall stood a little fellow not more than seven years of age. He rushed toward Evelyn, frantically throwing his arms about her.

"Oh, come quick, Sister Evelyn!" he cried. "Father has another fit, and is throwing things at mother!"

"Don't be frightened, my poor child—perhaps it isn't quite so bad as you think," said Evelyn. "But I will go over with you and see what I can do," taking the child's hand and hurrying off with him.

"I'll close de do', honey!" called Betsy, hurrying down the stairs and following them out on the little front porch, where she stood and watched the two, with big tears glistening in her eyes.

"Some day she'll be taken down, and nurver re-kiver!" she mumbled, wiping her eyes with the corner of her gingham apron. "Yo' can't burn de candle at bofe ends fo'ebber—" shaking her head mournfully. "How straight an' tall she is an' how pretty laik she hole her haid,—" a sudden light coming into her eyes, her heart now swelling with pride. "An' t' think ob her, a born lady, bein' dragged about laik a slave, at the beck an' call ob eb'rybody in dis town! I jes' feel laik skinnin' dat chile!"—and she shook her fist threateningly toward the little fellow, as the two entered a small house below on the other side.

For some time past, the Draytons had been of untold comfort and assistance to this neighbor, a

Mrs. Bentley, who, from all indications, had been brought up well, was educated and refined, but had the misfortune of marrying a man who had contracted the drink habit until it had developed into a disease. Although the Draytons made almost daily visits to the house, it was rarely that they encountered Mr. Bentley, who appeared to spend the greater part of his time away from home. But it so happened that two weeks previous to this day, Evelyn was in the house when he returned, reeling in the doorway, and in a highly excited condition. He was evidently very angry about something, and gave vent to it on the first person he saw, who happened to be his wife. He made straight for her as if to strike her, when by some manner or means which Evelyn could never afterwards explain, she succeeded in attracting his attention, and prevented the attack.

Little Harold had been a witness to the scene, and ever since had looked upon Sister Evelyn as a sort of guardian angel, or fairy who possessed a charm that had the power to cure his father's fits, as he always called them. His mother never telling him the real cause of these terrible outbreaks, of which the children, as well as herself, were in mortal terror.

When they arrived at the house, Evelyn hesitated. Was it not foolhardy for her to enter, and run the risk, perhaps, of incurring his displeasure at her interference? But when she heard the wailings of the baby, and shrieks from little Florence, aged only

four, she forgot all her fears, and ran up the stairs where a scene met her eyes that was tragic.

At one glance she took in the whole situation. Everything was in confusion. Broken vases lay here and there about the floor; furniture was overturned, and books lay scattered over the entire room.

In the midst of it all, on the floor, lay Mrs. Bentley, white, and apparently lifeless. At her side stood Florence, almost in convulsions with fright, while the baby lying in a bassinet was yelling lustily.

Fortunately the father was not in sight, and in less than a minute Evelyn had unfastened the woman's clothing, and was bathing her face with water. It was not long before she opened her eyes.

"Are the children safe?" she gasped.

"They are all right. And you will be, too, in a few minutes," said Evelyn cheerfully.

"He never was so violent before," she whispered. "I thought he would kill us all. My head pains me here—" pressing her hands against her temples.

"Yes, I see a red mark there," said Evelyn "but I don't think it is anything serious. Just let me hold this cold cloth there awhile. I want to get you on the couch as soon as you are able; I think you will be more comfortable."

"Thank you, Miss Drayton. You are very kind. But I do not want you to run the risk of meeting him. There is no telling what he may do. Do leave me—I am all right now. I think the worst is over with him. It sobered him up some, I guess, when he saw me fall."

At that instant a footstep was heard in the hall, and the intoxicated man, disheveled and bleary-eyed, stood at the door and gazed in, leaning up against the wall.

Evelyn gathered together all the courage that she could muster. Her heart beat rapidly at the thought of her peril as well as that of the others.

"Mrs. Bentley will be all right in a few minutes," she said coolly. "See! The color is coming back in her cheeks."

He looked somewhat relieved at Evelyn's words, and took a step or two into the room.

"The whole trouble is, there's never any peace in this house," he muttered in a thick voice. "No comfort, no nothing. Meals never on time, babies always yelling, everything topsy-turvy from morning until night—enough to make any man boil. Here it is nearly six o'clock, and no dinner—and I had no lunch, neither."

"That is too bad," said Evelyn, feeling her way cautiously. "But you see, Mrs. Bentley is not well, and then the maid having left, I suppose it is impossible for her to get things in good running order."

"Good running order!" laughed he hoarsely. "Why, she doesn't know what the word means! I never saw good running order around this shanty—nor any other for that matter, that she has had charge of."

"We are going to have dinner ready for you in a few minutes," said Evelyn calmly. "Mrs. Bentley tells me it is almost ready to be dished up."

"Yes, Edward," added the wife. "I will go down now and put it on the table—" attempting to rise.

At this the man turned on his heel and walked away without another word.

Evelyn succeeded in placing Mrs. Bentley on the couch, and insisted on going down and serving the dinner. Harold and Florence followed her. The baby had very conveniently fallen asleep, and quiet reigned once more.

Coming in contact with this family had been a great experience for Evelyn, and made a very strong impression upon her. Mrs. Bentley had kept her past history a secret; only once did she refer to it, and that was in the excitement of the moment, two weeks previous, when Evelyn happened to be present on a similar occasion. She did not go into any details, but simply stated that she had married against her parents' wishes, and as they would not recognize her husband, she had kept herself from them entirely, and her residence a secret. That was all.

To Evelyn, Mrs. Bentley was an interesting character-study. That she had brains, one could easily see. But domestically she appeared to be a complete failure, though her intentions were of the best. She no doubt might have made a successful school teacher, but as a mother, wife, and house-keeper, she was a dismal failure. Theoretically she had few equals for one of her age, but practically she was an ignoramus. To make matters worse, she seemed to be entirely devoid of tact, and Evelyn saw that

she was as helpless in one way as she was capable in another. She was taught one lesson by it all—that although one may have a familiar knowledge of theories, one is almost bound to fail unless able to put them to some practical use.

After becoming well acquainted with Mrs. Bentley, Evelyn realized how necessary it was for every woman to examine herself, so that if she does not naturally possess any practical ability or tact, to make every effort to acquire these two important qualifications.

Before she left the house, she had cleared away the dishes, straightened up the house, and put the children to bed, leaving Mrs. Bentley comfortable, and happy in the thought that her husband was snoring away in bed, where he would very likely remain until morning.

CHAPTER XII.

On the Sunday evening following her first meeting with Whitfield, Adele, as usual, attended services, but sat near the door so that she might not miss seeing him, should he come in. She was seated but a minute or two when he entered and walked up to a pew near the front. She was the first to leave the church, and in her anxiety to see if he accompanied Evelyn home, she led Hannah across the street, stationed herself in the shadow of a tree, and eagerly watched the people coming out.

"I just have the curiosity to see if Miss Drayton has any gentlemen admirers in the church, who accompany her home," she explained to poor unsuspecting Hannah.

"She has a string of them, I'll wager!" declared Hannah. "There will be no trouble for her to find lovers, the sweet thing. There she comes now!" she whispered, as though afraid Evelyn might hear. "Yes, and there's a gentleman with her, too. Why, Miss Adele! it is Mr. Whitfield!"

"So it is!" returned Adele, with a peculiar metallic-like laugh, while she clenched her hands and snapped her eyes, as the pair walked off together.

"Come!" she said, with a forced air of gayety. "let us walk up on this side, and see if he goes in the house—" Yes—he actually is!"—and she gave a

hollow laugh that was most unnatural, but which Hannah was too dense to notice.

"Wouldn't that be a catch for her, if she could win him! A poor minister's daughter, but—" with an indifferent shrug of her shoulders—"true love is not bought with money, Hannah! And what's the odds after all, so one's happy, whether one marries beneath him or not? She is just the girl for Frank Whitfield. He may not be quite so good as she, but he is not altogether of the world, either. Such is life—such is life!" she rattled on, hardly knowing what she was saying, or where she was going, as the door closed after the couple she had been watching across the street. That same night, when Evelyn saw Whitfield standing near the church door, waiting for her, she was conscious of a keen pleasure. There had been an awakening of some need in her nature which he seemed to fill.

"Your father's sermon was a very interesting one this evening," he said, when they seated themselves on the verandah, back of the parlor, which was a very pleasant place on a summer's evening. It overlooked the garden which separated the house from the church, and in which grew many plants, and roses in abundance.

"I sat up very near the pulpit so as not to miss any of it. I imagine your father must have been a very eloquent speaker before this affliction of his developed. What an effort it is for him to try to make himself heard. Wouldn't a long rest aid materially toward a recovery?"

"Yes, we have always thought so, Mr. Whitfield. And his physicians have repeatedly declared that it is the only remedy. But he has, until recently, felt that it was impossible for him to take any extended rest, which meant to resign his pastorate. I am very glad to say, however, that arrangements have just been made that will give him at the very least a rest of a year."

"I am glad to hear it," said Whitfield. "He appeared to me this evening as though laboring under a great strain, not only in his efforts to make himself heard, but there were marked indications of great physical debility with which he also appeared to be struggling."

"You are right, Mr. Whitfield—my father is almost a physical wreck," said Evelyn, endeavoring to keep back the tears. "But he has only a few weeks more, when the struggle will be over."

"His views on the divinity of Christ were well worth hearing. I suppose, of course, your own views on the subject are practically the same."

"Yes, I consider the universality of Christ one of the greatest proofs of His Divinity."

"I had never thought of it in that light before, Miss Drayton, but it is true that Christ is the only great religious Teacher, whom you cannot limit by time, country, or class. He fits into every age and race, and the very fact that He can be the ideal of the twentieth century, proves that He was no mere man."

"And yet," responded Evelyn, reflectively, "so

many doubt His divinity, so many believe Him to be just a good man, a great religious teacher. Of course, He *is* all this, but, oh, so much besides."

"If He were only a man," argued Whitfield, "why in twenty hundred years should not a greater have been born. Why should we look back so far to perfect manhood, when the whole race has been progressing since then?"

"I had never thought of that," said Evelyn. "You see you are already beginning to teach *me*. And do you know the very fact that you and I are so profoundly moved by such thoughts of Him, is another proof. There is something within us that cries out that He is Divine."

"Instinct," replied Whitfield, smiling, "is more an attribute of woman than of man. *We* have to get things by the slow road of reason."

"Ah," laughed she, "instinct seldom is wrong, and since you cannot feel, trust us who can, to lead you."

"I would trust your guidance anywhere," spoke up Whitfield, with such fervor that they both started, then lapsed into silence, turning their eyes toward the garden, then up at the star-lit sky.

"When you stop to think," Whitfield began presently, breaking the silence, "how delicate, and at the same time how gigantic is the earth's mechanism, how incomprehensible in its regularity, how can an intelligent being help but see that a scheme of such magnitude could never exist without an intellect back of it so vast as to be beyond the comprehension of man."

"Yes," said Evelyn, "it has always been a problem to me, how any normal man can help but instinctively feel that there is a mighty unseen power to which man and nature must bow."

"I do think, Miss Drayton, there does exist in the hearts of all mankind a longing to know something of the mysteries about us, and what lies beyond the grave. And I suppose it is because we are conscious of that mysterious something, of which we instinctively feel we will be a part—a sort of sub-consciousness, that we are here only in preparation for some future state."

"And yet how we avoid making that preparation," said Evelyn.

Again for a moment there was silence between them.

"Yes," began Whitfield again, still gazing wistfully towards the stars. "This universe is sufficient evidence for me of the existence at least of a Supreme Being, to say nothing of the unknown worlds revolving in a space so vast that the human mind is not capable of making even a guess at its dimensions."

"And is it not the fact, that behind it all, is not a distant, all-wise God, but a loving Christ-like Father, that makes it all so beautiful, so very wonderful?" queried Evelyn.

"I cannot follow you there altogether," said Whitfield, musingly. "God still seems far away and distant to me, but I am groping, and feel sure that the dawn must be ahead."

"It certainly is," declared she. "There is a verse like that in the Bible, it says: 'The way of the righteous is as the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'"

"Beautiful!" exclaimed he, all alert again, "but you couldn't count me among the righteous, I am just beginning to seek after righteousness."

"But," laughed Evelyn, "you forget that it says, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.'"

"Ah," sighed he, "that is just the trouble. I am not yet 'hungry,' but am trying to cultivate an appetite. You forget, perhaps, that I am only a beginner in the study of the perfect life."

"I have a great fear, nevertheless," laughed she, "that like many other bright scholars, you will soon leave your teacher far behind on the road."

"Bright scholar!" spoke up Whitfield, with evident amusement. "On the contrary, I am so dull and ignorant on these matters that I am ashamed."

"Perhaps you won't believe me," he continued, after a pause, "but I have actually been reading my Bible regularly, and am beginning to discover that it is a most fascinating study."

"It was sometime before I made that discovery, Mr. Whitfield, and you will find that the more familiar you become with it, the more wonderful and interesting it appears. You remember Rosseau says, 'How petty are the books of philosophers, with all their pomp, compared with the Gospels.' I'll tell you just how I feel in regard to the Bible. That

even should it be denounced by all mankind as not being of Divine origin, I should still desire to take it for my guide, to enable me to live the best life possible in this world. Its beauty of thought and purpose, the teachings of Christ that can fill our every need, its uplifting to everything high and noble, makes it an inspiration to me.

Whitfield listened intently, gazing admiringly all the while at the young woman before him, there being just enough light streaming through the doorway from a burner in the parlor, to make her face discernable.

"What a world this would be if every professing Christian stood by the Bible with the same loyalty," said he.

"If I am loyal, it is because I thoroughly believe in it, and because I know my weaknesses, and feel in great need of a guide, which the Bible only is capable of being."

This provoked a smile from Whitfield.

"I fear you have too exalted an opinion of my Christian standing," laughed she, interpreting the cause of his amusement.

"I certainly have a very high opinion of your standing in that respect which would be hard to shake," declared he. "But I was thinking if you should feel in such great need of a guide, what in the name of all that's good should my need be?"

"No greater than mine," laughed Evelyn.

A clock on the parlor mantel struck the half-hour. Whitfield started and jumped to his feet.

"Can that be half-past ten?" said he, stepping into the room to be sure. "I did not realize it was so late—and I was anxious to see mother before she retired."

"How is she this summer?" inquired Evelyn.

"Not quite so well, thank you," returned he sadly. "Perhaps it will please you to know that she too possesses the same faith that you do, Miss Drayton. And it certainly has given her untold comfort. She has a living heart-sorrow, of which we never speak outside of the family. It happened some years ago, when I was too young to appreciate it. But now I understand what it has been to her, and I am in hopes of being able some day in the near future to lift that great weight from her heart."

"Oh, I am very sorry for her! And do you really think you will succeed in accomplishing it?"

"Well, I am at least determined not to leave a stone unturned in my efforts. Good-night. I am leaving in the assurance that I have gained much to-night on my way to perfection," he laughed.

He retained her hand just a trifle longer than usual. He was conscious that the influence of her personality was growing upon him, and it seemed he could not resist the charm that her presence appeared to breathe around him.

As they stood at the parlor door he experienced a sudden yearning of affection toward her, as one might toward some beautiful, happy, innocent child, and longed to imprint a kiss on the sweet mouth so temptingly near.

But with all Evelyn's childlike simplicity and innocence, there existed also a womanliness and dignity which all men felt bound to reverence. So Whitfield released the hand, and bowed his last good-night with all the grace and politeness of a Chesterfield.

CHAPTER XIII.

For several days the principal topic of conversation in Clover Hills was the resignation of the Reverend Dr. Drayton, over which many rejoiced, solely on account of the relief they knew it would be to him to keep out of the pulpit in his present state of health.

By his untiring efforts, sympathy, and eagerness to give assistance, he had endeared himself not only to the people of his congregation, but to the population of Clover Hills in general. The poor of the town almost worshiped him, and consequently were sorely grieved on hearing it—especially as he was to leave Clover Hills.

Adele and Marie were discussing it one morning in Marie's room, and soon it led to the subject nearest their hearts.

"Do you know, Adele, I think Frank Whitfield is smitten with Evelyn Drayton?" said Marie. "He was standing at the church door Sunday evening when Martha and I came out, and I had the curiosity to see if it were she he was waiting for, so we stood at the corner and I watched. Sure enough, it was. The instant she appeared, he stepped up to her, and accompanied her home."

"He may be," said Adele, with apparent indifference. "It would be a great catch for her, wouldn't it?—an obscure clergyman's daughter! And yet—

I'm not so sure about it either. She appears to have so many admirers, who are very attentive. The other day I saw her out driving with Alfred Scott. I believe I forgot to tell you about it. He was gazing down upon her for all the world like a lover."

Marie started visibly at this.

"If she succeeds in winning either one of them, she will be a very fortunate young lady," she said, making desperate efforts to appear calm.

"To my mind, Frank Whitfield would be the greater catch of the two, Marie. The Whitfields, you know, are of the aristocracy—" with a forced laugh.

"Oh, bosh!" snapped Marie. "I'll wager if you looked up Alfred's pedigree you would find that his family is just as good. I know for one thing, that his grandmother was a Spanish lady of very high rank."

"Leaving all that out of the question, I must confess I cannot imagine either of those young men contemplating marriage with Evelyn Drayton. Their associations have been with a class of women so entirely different, and their tastes and interests along lines so adverse to hers, that it seems ridiculous that they would for an instant think of narrowing down to a life so prosaic and dull, as it certainly would be by such a union."

Adele clenched her hands; her excited nerves were gradually getting the upper hand as the conversation went on.

“Still, love plays very strange pranks, at times, you know, Adele! One cannot always tell where a man’s fancy may lead him.” Marie began to tap her foot on the floor. “Besides, she does not strike me as being one of those goody-goods,” she added.

Adele’s foot began to shake now. She bit her lip, and tried to subdue her feelings, which nowadays appeared to get the better of her every time Evelyn Drayton’s name was mentioned.

“Yes, she appears very much alive—that’s a fact; just full of spirits—anything but prosaic, as I imagined her. That is, in her manner.”

“Won’t I tease Alfred Scott about her, if he should happen to call here!” Marie said, with a forced laugh, breathing hard in the throes of some inward emotion.

“You know Alfred Scott quite well, don’t you?” inquired Adele.

“Oh, yes,” nonchalantly. “He calls at the house now and then during the winter.”

“Marie, I’m beginning to think as you do in regard to Evelyn Drayton. She is certainly a girl with a ‘way,’ and one not to be trusted,” tapping her foot with renewed vigor.

“I felt that from the very first—even before I saw her,” Marie declared, with a scornful curl of her lip.

“Yes, I feel convinced now also, that she is playing a part, using her peculiar talents as a bait to secure a rich husband. My faculty for penetration may not be remarkable, but I think I am at least

keen enough to penetrate beneath that subtle mask of hers. I have heard of such persons before."

There was a bitterness, a slurring sarcasm, in Adele's voice which served only as fresh fuel to Marie's rising excitement.

"I have not only heard of them, but have also come in contact with them; consequently, I am not easily deceived. As I said before, she is not to be trusted! I had my suspicions long before you."

They were both breathing hard now, their faces flushed, and eyes glittering with every word they uttered,—forgetting entirely the agreement they had made not to discuss this young lady until they were ready to leave Clover Hills.

"Just wait until a good opportunity presents itself, and I will let her know exactly what I think of her pretended piety!" cried Adele scornfully.

"I'll bring her down a peg or two before very long!" laughed Marie, derisively, rising in her excitement and pacing the floor.

"I am beginning to think she is an artful adventuress," declared Adele, with passionate gesticulations. But a sudden revelation dawned upon her, checking the outburst. "She must be in love with Alfred Scott," she thought, watching Marie now with a new interest. She had had her suspicions of this before, and now she was sure of it. It was a warning to be on her guard.

Just then Marie tripped over a stool that stood near the sofa, and losing her balance, she fell over on Adele with great force. They struggled for a

few seconds to extricate themselves, and as Marie regained her feet, Adele burst into a peal of laughter, and shaking a playful finger at her companion, said, "I see it all now, Marie, you are in love with Alfred Scott."

"And you with Frank Whitfield," returned Marie, with flashing eyes. "Don't try to deny it, it would be useless," she added, as Adele turned toward her with a look of disdain, and attempted to speak.

The evening following this scene, Whitfield called on Adele. He could not, under existing conditions, postpone it any longer.

To play the part of a semi-invalid was becoming irksome to Adele. It necessitated a continual watchfulness. She generally held herself aloof from the other guests, and frequently had her meals served in her rooms. She had already discovered that as an invalid she did not appeal to Whitfield, as she had hoped, and consequently decided that it would be advisable to bring about a speedy recovery.

"I hope to see you very soon restored to your usual good health," he said, with a look in his eyes that indicated mirth, when the subject was being discussed that evening, and Adele had made the remark that she noticed a decided improvement every day in her condition.

She gave him a searching look. Could it be that he doubted her sincerity in the matter? The very thought spurred her on to renewed efforts in keeping up the farce. Rather than have him suspicious of her actions, she felt that she would prefer playing the part of an invalid for a year.

They were seated in a very attractive room, one of Adele's suite, where she received her callers. It was on one of the front corners of the hotel, with door-windows opening on a balcony. It was by one of these they were seated.

The town lay outstretched before them, plainly visible by the light of a full moon. Now and then strains of music came to their ears from Linden Park, just a short distance away, where a band was stationed every evening during the summer months.

In the course of the conversation the clergyman's resignation was discussed, in which Whitfield expressed no little interest and sympathy.

"Isn't that Evelyn Drayton, walking with that tall gentleman?" he said, suddenly attracted by a couple passing under an electric light.

"Yes, I think it is," returned Adele, leaning forward with him.

"He looks very much like a clergyman," said Whitfield, rising to obtain a better look. "They are trying candidates now, you know, and I shouldn't wonder if he were one."

"She appears to have no end of admirers," said Adele, watching Whitfield closely.

"That's a fact. And at the same time, she makes no effort whatever to seek them," returned he.

Adele winced. She flashed an angry dart at him, the words cutting home.

"She is a remarkable young woman," he continued reflectively, as he seated himself. "I never met one who possesses such an unusual combination

of characteristics. To cultivate her society would be a profit to anyone."

Adele shook her foot.

"It seems to me, Frank, that whenever we meet, it is simply to hear you expatiate on Miss Drayton's wonderful efficiencies."

"Oh, then you are not interested in her, after all!" he spoke up, with a sudden turn toward her.

"Why, of course I am!"—with a nervous little laugh. "Haven't I agreed with you that she is a marvel? But I think there is someone else in the world beside Evelyn Drayton. Then, too, Frank, your words imply that I am a terrible sinner in comparison, and would be greatly benefited by placing myself under her most superior influence."

"Now don't be foolish, Adele. It was not my intention to underestimate you, or overestimate Miss Drayton. But to speak plainly, you know as well as I do, that we live such selfish lives in comparison, that it would not do either of us any harm to take her as an example."

"I take it for granted, then, that you thoroughly approve of her sentiments," said Adele, cooling down somewhat, realizing that her jealousy was causing her to jump too quickly at conclusions, and act in a very childish manner.

"I cannot help but approve of them, Adele, when I see the result."

"Well," sighed Adele, with the view of gaining his good-will and admiration, "I acknowledge that there is great room for improvement in me. But

what can one expect of an only child, petted, indulged, and waited upon all her life? Now, truly, do you think that Evelyn Drayton would have been the girl she is, had she been in my place? One's environment and inherent tendencies have everything to do with one's development. But even so, Frank"—leaning toward him, with her dark eyes full upon him—"it does not necessarily make one proof against reformation."

She laid her hand on the arm of his chair, near his own, and in a trembling voice continued:

"A person of whom I thought very much, could wield a great influence over me, and make of me just what he desired."

There was silence for a moment. Whitfield could feel her fingers trembling against his. He gazed straight ahead through the door-window, and riveted his eyes on the church-spire, standing out distinctly in the moonlight. He knew that she was breathing hard. From the corner of his eye he could see the white neck heaving, the parted lips, the graceful figure in an exquisite gown of gauzy light blue. He was conscious of the frailty of all his firm resolutions. They were beginning to waver under the mysterious spell that was slowly creeping over him. Yes, all the reasonings he had daily with his better-self, since their last meeting, were disappearing like so much vapor under the influence of this dark beauty's peculiar charms. With one masterful effort he pulled himself together, and suddenly rose to his feet.

"I don't doubt it—I don't doubt it for a minute, Adele," he repeated. "For that matter, we are all more or less influenced by others,—especially by those whom we like."

He knit his brows frowningly, and paced the floor with his hands clasped behind him. A lamp was burning dimly in a far corner, pervading the room with a soft mellow light. The thin white curtains fluttered back and forth in the light breeze that was blowing, and fanned his flushed face.

Adele rose, and glided noiselessly toward a sofa in front of which he was pacing. With hands folded, she sat watching him, puzzled at his actions.

"Frank, Frank!" she finally said, in a voice tremulous with suppressed emotion. "What is it that so disturbs you? I never remember your acting as you have of late—so mysterious and unlike yourself. Won't you confide in me, and tell me your trouble?"

He halted at her words, and stood facing her.

"Trouble such as mine, Adele, is one that is beyond human help. There are conflicts that can never be shared with another, even the very closest of friends."

"Tell me this much, then," she pleaded, with a deep tenderness in her voice. "Is the trouble in any way connected with a woman?"

He stood quite still, and gazed down upon her in silence. Never before had she appeared so alluring. With one sweeping glance he drank in each separate charm: the beautiful dark hair, the fascina-

tion of her lustrous eyes, and the graceful curve of her white shoulders—even the beautiful high-arched foot did not escape his eyes, encased in a satin slipper of blue. He felt himself fast giving way under the influence of her subtle powers and sank down on a low ottoman that stood near her.

She saw plainly that he was laboring under some powerful emotion. "He *must* love me!" she thought.

"Adele," he said hoarsely, "the burden that I carry must always remain a secret in my own heart. Do not ask me any more questions concerning it. You see, like you, I too am run down and very nervous this spring, and this trouble of mine consequently takes a greater hold upon me, and causes me very frequently to grow melancholy, and I become irritated, and upset completely, it seems, at the slightest provocation."

He gave a hollow little laugh, and kept his eyes turned from the enchantress, gazing steadily at the lamp in the far corner.

"But Frank, what did I say that could possibly have irritated you? I'm sure there was nothing farther from my intentions," she said pleadingly, the tears actually glistening in her eyes.

"Oh, I know you didn't! I wasn't referring especially to you. I meant that it is generally so—nerves on edge all the time, you know."

Adele leaned over very close to him now, and lowered her head until it came very near to his. He still sat with his eyes riveted on the lamp. He looked like one dazed.

"Can I resist?" he thought. "I do love her, in a way." His body swayed for an instant. "I might as well marry her," he decided. "I may be happier than I imagine." Still he hesitated. There was something holding him back, though the impulse to clasp her in his arms and tell her of his love was almost irresistible.

Adele dropped her head still lower. He could feel her warm breath against his brow, and the pulsations of her fast-beating heart. Yet still he sat staring toward the lamp. He sees something now. A face, pure, sweet, and spiritual, with deep fathomless eyes gazing straight at him, reproachfully, pleadingly. And two arms appear to stretch out toward him as though to rescue him from some impending danger. Yes, and he even hears the same voice that spoke to him that Sunday evening. "I know that when you once take a step that is for your good, you will push ahead past all obstacles; I at least have that faith in you."

Gradually that strange fascination appeared to loosen its hold on him, and his spirit to recoil from the enchantress at his side.

"No, no—this is not love!" he thought, "it cannot be, simply an infatuation of the senses. Love is pure, divine, and is sanctioned from above."

"Frank!" whispered Adele in the tenderest of tones, laying her jeweled hand softly on his shoulder, confident now that success was hers at last. "Won't you turn around and give me your attention for a little while? Come, look at me!"

But by this time the spell was broken. Once again he had come out victorious. At the touch of her hand he awoke entirely. He was himself once again. He rose to his feet, and turning, stood erect before her.

"I did not tell you the truth a few minutes ago, Adele!" he said. "You *did* irritate me, and you irritate me now. You are so mercurial, unnatural, critical, unreasonable, and exceedingly gracious by turns. Your whole manner is a conundrum to me. But never mind—I bear you no ill-will. I am a victim of the same complaint, which has transformed us both into two irritable and morose mortals, and it is not a good thing for us to be together. We don't seem to have a good effect upon each other. My head is aching badly, and I think it would be better for us both if I said good-night."

He held out his hand, which Adele took mechanically, without uttering a word. The next instant he was gone, hurrying down the hall toward the elevator, leaving Adele standing like one paralyzed.

"I don't know just how she interpreted it," he thought, "but I could think of nothing better to say on the spur of the moment in explanation of it all. She is like a serpent,—at one time fascinates, at another, repels. This settles it!" he declared, "I am going to leave for London as soon as I can get off, and I will keep it a secret."

The whole act was so sudden, so unexpected, so entirely opposite to what Adele was looking for, that her heart for the time seemed to stand still. She had tried to speak, but could not—only her lips moved.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was toward morning before Adele closed her eyes in sleep, and she succeeded then only under the influence of an opiate. For hours she had lain with her eyes wide open, her arms outstretched on the coverlet, her hands clenched, and every nerve tense.

Although she lay motionless, her brain was aflame in a mental conflict. It was as though she had received some terrible shock, that had paralyzed the body, leaving only the brain alive. To meet with such a disappointment, when she had every reason to believe that, after all, her most cherished hopes were about to be realized, was a blow she was not equal to, either physically or mentally, and she felt its effects for several days.

The next morning she regained her equilibrium sufficiently to be able to reason things out with some little satisfaction.

"He must love me!" she declared. "I feel sure of it—and yet what is it that is influencing him from speaking the word?"

This question she asked herself repeatedly. All day long she strove to penetrate the mystery of his actions, as she sat in the solitude of her room, too ill, she told Hannah, to leave it. She refused to see all callers, even Marie, on the plea of a headache; she even dismissed Hannah when there was nothing special to keep her there.

Toward evening she sat listlessly gazing out of the window, when suddenly her whole face lighted up. The haggard, drawn look it had worn since the night previous disappeared as if by magic, and her eyes sparkled with their old-time brilliancy. She actually laughed aloud, in the excess of some newly-discovered joy. She rose and locked the doors, then paced the floor excitedly, exultingly.

"It is—it is! I have it now!" she murmured. "He has been carrying on a flirtation with Miss Drayton, and she has taken him seriously. Yes—he may even have imagined himself in love with her, but he discovered his mistake and is now in a quandary, in his efforts gracefully to undo the mischief in a way that would still retain her respect. I see it all now!" she chuckled. "She has been an inspiration to him in a religious way, and he has either mistaken it for love, or else she has. And he has suddenly found himself in a great predicament. Of course he would not want to speak to me of love until he had this affair all straightened out with her. He is just that kind of a man. I know he would feel keenly for any girl who had fallen in love with him under a false idea of his attentions, and especially for a girl like Evelyn Drayton, for whom he seems to have the greatest respect and admiration. He did not mean a word of it when he reprimanded me in that unkind manner. I am sure of it now. It was simply the only thing he could hit upon on the spur of the moment to keep from proposing."

This new idea of Whitfield's peculiar manner toward her changed the entire outlook of things, and her spirits and hopes rose to a height they had not attained since she had her first suspicions of Evelyn Drayton as a rival.

As agreed, it had been her aim as well as Marie's, to seek her society as much as possible, but in this they had so far met with very little success, failing to obtain an interview of any length. They each had sent her several invitations to dine with them at the hotel, none of which she had accepted. It was either some previous engagement, or a pressing duty, that prevented.

The second day after Whitfield called, Adele was seated on the hotel verandah with Marie and several guests. It was late in the afternoon, and the people were promenading or sitting in groups waiting for the dinner hour. Adele noticed a very handsome gentleman coming up the steps, and before he reached the top, two other gentlemen started from the porch to greet him.

They stood for several minutes talking, very near to Adele. She heard Whitfield's name mentioned, and strained her ears to listen.

"No wonder you are surprised to see me. I had no idea myself, this time yesterday, of being in Clover Hills to-night," said the new arrival. "But I had to run up to see Frank Whitfield on some business before he sails for Europe. He made up his mind suddenly to sail next Wednesday on the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse*."

"I understood that he expected to remain here all summer," remarked one of the others.

"So he did, but I believe his friends on the other side have been persuading him; besides, he is in hopes of the sea-voyage being of great benefit to his health."

"Too bad he is all knocked out—deuced fine fellow, and so brainy and clever for one so young."

"That's the trouble; he is blessed, or burdened—whichever you might call it—with a too active brain," spoke up the new arrival. "He applies himself very closely to business, and is, at the same time, quite a lion in the social world. He has by birth, you know, entrée into the most select circles, but in reality he doesn't give a fig for it all. Time and again he has told me that he is a society man owing only to the force of circumstances, and not from choice."

Adele waited to hear no more. She excused herself to Marie and the other ladies, and quickly sought her room, where she settled herself for a quiet soliloquy. In a very short time she had all her plans made.

"Hannah," she said, when she appeared in answer to her ring, "I have decided to sail for London on Wednesday, if I am able to get accommodations, on the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse*. Say nothing about it, as I do not care to bid good-by to a lot of people I scarcely know, and in whom I have no interest. I have come to the conclusion that it doesn't agree with me here as much as I had hoped, and I don't

know but that I will do just as well on the other side as here. I'm getting homesick, too, for Father and Mother."

"Just as you like, Miss Adele. You're not improving much here, that's a fact, and perhaps it will be all for the best to be with your people," said Hannah, offering up a silent prayer for the wonderful change of heart that had taken place in her young mistress at Clover Hills.

To desire to attend services, not only twice a day on Sundays, but also during the week, was sufficient evidence of a great spiritual awakening, which Hannah so far had never doubted.

Marie was more than surprised, when Adele acquainted her with her intention of leaving so soon. At Adele's request, she promised to keep it a secret.

They had become quite chummy, and sworn friends, since the discovery of each other's secret, which had been revealed in an unguarded moment, and had come to a mutual agreement that they would never disclose it to a living mortal, but would keep it sacredly locked in their heart of hearts forever. This they had sealed with tears and kisses. Their confidential talks, after this, were of much comfort to them both, but there was a great deal connected with the heart-secret of each that was never divulged. In fact, they frequently even tried to pass the whole affair off as a joke, and to convince each other that they were only amusing themselves with these gentlemen for the sole purpose of being envied by others—as every young woman

was who received any attention from either Mr. Whitfield or Mr. Scott.

Adele decided to make one more effort, before she left, to get Evelyn at the hotel, and sent her an invitation that night to take dinner with her on Saturday.

She started off early with Hannah the next morning for New York, and to her great delight succeeded in obtaining accommodations on the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse*, but only by the greatest piece of luck, a stateroom having just been given up on account of illness. On her return to Clover Hills, in the evening, she found a note from Evelyn, accepting her invitation.

"I believe my luck is changing," she thought. "Everything seems now to be going my way. If I could only feel sure as to Frank's motive in leaving so suddenly, and keeping it quiet! Of course, it is all on account of this trouble with Evelyn Drayton, I am quite confident. But why he did not tell me, I don't understand, especially as he knows I may sail any day. However, I shall not bother my brains any more about it. I know that he loves me, and the mystery will all be cleared when we get on the other side. How fortunate that I should have overheard that conversation!—and he will never know that I had the least inkling of his sailing. When we meet I shall tell him that I, too, had planned to keep my departure a secret.

She took extra pains with her toilet on Saturday afternoon, decking herself in one of her finest

gowns, an exquisite creation of sheer white material, with threads of silver running through it. The bodice was cut décolleté, the sleeves very short. Her waist was encircled by a unique girdle of silver links studded with turquoises, through which was run a soft watered ribbon of delicate grey. On her neck she wore a chain of narrow links that matched, and a low tiara-shaped comb, also of silver and turquoises, held the pompadour in place.

A dance was held at the hotel every Saturday evening, when the majority of the guests arrayed themselves in full evening dress, whether they danced or not.

As Adele was supposed to be a semi-invalid, she had always refrained from participating in the dancing, though she had sat in the ballroom part of the evening as a spectator, the cynosure of all eyes. Her striking beauty and exquisite gowns had made her an object of great interest in the hotel as well as in the town. But she was extremely exclusive, and refused repeatedly to be introduced to gentlemen who were most eager to meet her.

When she saw Evelyn coming up the walk, her artistic eye took her in at a glance. Her lip curled with envy, for notwithstanding the simplicity of her attire, Adele could not shut her eyes to the fact that she was very attractive and sweet to look upon.

The day being a warm one, Evelyn had selected her thinnest white dress. It was cut square in the neck, just at the turn of the throat, finished with lace, and sleeves to the elbow. Her hat was particu-

larly becoming, of white chiffon and pink roses, which she had made herself.

When Adele heard her footstep in the hall, she opened the door, but it was just in time to see her disappear in Marie's room opposite.

"Killing two birds with one stone," she pouted with a shrug.

A half-hour passed before she knocked at Adele's door. A few minutes later the long-desired tête-à-tête was in full swing.

With cautiousness and tact, Adele aimed to steer the conversation into channels where she hoped to get at least an inkling of Evelyn's true feelings toward Whitfield.

"I have often been amazed, Miss Drayton, to see among your circle of friends so many who are of the fashionable world," she remarked, after she had succeeded in getting Evelyn to relate much about the charitable and religious work in which she was engaged.

Evelyn laughed merrily.

"Why should it be necessary for me to confine myself exclusively to missionaries and religious workers? To know human nature and be able to sympathize with it from a broad standpoint, one must come in contact with all sorts of people. Indeed," Evelyn continued with a twinkle—"I am myself very much of the earth, earthy. I love all sorts of people; and this beautiful world affords such endless avenues of pleasure and interest, I am always discovering something new, it seems, that

awakens a new inspiration, something new to admire and to love."

"To love," thought Adele. "Of course she means Frank!" And she listened with a deep interest to the philosophy of this unique girl, as Evelyn continued with a sudden burst of enthusiasm, after a slight hesitation. "Oh, I do so adore this world, and everything that is in it, whether it be in the way of nature, humanity, art, music,—yes, and even dress and jewels."

Her face lighted up, and the dimples played mischievously as she gave Adele a sweeping glance from the turquoise-studded tiara down to the white satin slippers with silver buckles. "In fact, I love everything that has the power to please the eye and charm the ear."

Adele opened her eyes wider and wider in her growing astonishment.

"You surprise me!" she exclaimed. "I never imagined that you could be so worldly as to admire dress and jewels."

"Oh, indeed I am! Why shouldn't I?" laughed Evelyn, in keen enjoyment of it all. "By the way, I admire exceedingly the gown you have on—it is a dream. I should like to have one just like it."

"Miss Drayton!" gasped Adele.

"I am in earnest!" declared Evelyn, her eyes sparkling like those of a mischievous child. "And that chain and girdle I have been admiring ever since I came into the room."

"Then you don't consider it a sin to love

beautiful clothes and jewels, and long to possess them?"

"No," said Evelyn, raising her brows. "That is, providing the longing does not extend beyond certain bounds." Her face was radiant now with the keen pleasure she took in the situation.

"Indeed!" said Adele haughtily. "I should be interested to know just where you consider it advisable to draw the line."

There was now a quick transition from gay to grave in Evelyn. She thought it about time to rectify the wrong impression she had evidently made.

"I would draw the line," she began, "when the longing reaches a point where the love of dress controls the woman, and ceases to be controlled by her. When she is making herself unhappy in the envy of others. I believe it is the duty of every woman to look as well as she can, but the expenditure should always, of course, be in proportion to the circumstances in which she is placed, and neither time nor thought spent upon it at the expense of more important things. I remember so well—" her face broadening into a smile again—"a remark my grandmother made in criticizing the plain garb of the Friends. Although one herself, she was never in sympathy with their idea regarding dress. 'I can never be convinced,' she said, 'that the Lord intended woman to tie herself up in a meal-sack.' And I agree with her most emphatically. I have also frequently heard her say that it can be of no credit to

a woman deliberately to make herself an unpleasing object to look upon. But I did not come here to give a lecture on dress. We have wandered far from the subject with which we started."

"It was in regard to your having so many fashionable and worldly friends," Adele reminded her. "And why you can take pleasure in associating with such. For instance, there is Mr. Scott, for one, whose entire time is taken up in seeking pleasure—and Mr. Whitfield for another."

Adele gave a little cough, and cleared her throat.

"Although not quite so worldly, perhaps, as Mr. Scott, at the same time he is not what you would call a religious man; and there are several others, also, with whom you appear to be on very friendly terms. Now I fail to understand this, when your views and aims are so entirely different, your plane of living so far above them all."

Evelyn burst into a gay little laugh.

"I can make no other explanation than this," said she. "It must be because I am very much of the world myself, and find that we have much in common. Of course"—changing now from gay to grave—"I *have* friends and acquaintances who entertain views on many questions that are at variance with my own. But it is an education to exchange views—it broadens one, and sharpens the intellect—to say nothing of the knowledge that is gained in coming in contact with human nature in all its phases." Evelyn's face flushed at these words, bringing up, as they did, her interesting talks with

Whitfield, but she hurried on, as though to hide her confusion—"I love people, Miss Kingsley; they are like living books, and very frequently more interesting to me than the printed ones."

Adele raised her shoulders and smiled superciliously. The blush did not escape her notice.

"I am on the right track now!" she thought. "And must make the most of the opportunity."

Amid all the liveliness of Evelyn's spirits and good-humored raillery, Adele caught an insight, every little while, of the underlying earnestness and depth of her nature; and she instinctively felt the hidden strength and force of her character, and knew that she was Evelyn's inferior. She threw her a look of defiance when she asked:

"Do you find an exchange of views really profitable with men like Mr. Scott and Mr. Whitfield, who are so far from being religious?"

"I do, very," was the decided answer, the blush deepening.

She dropped her eyes for an instant under the steady gaze of the piercing black ones opposite her.

"Women don't blush without a cause!" thought Adele. "Well, I must confess, my idea of what a Christian is, or should be, is evidently a mistaken one," said she, in as cool a manner as she could command. "I always imagined that it was impossible for such to find a congenial and sympathetic companion in one who did not live by the same principles."

"I hardly think, Miss Kingsley, that you know

either Mr. Whitfield or Mr. Scott, if you consider them altogether void of religious sentiment. I have found them both capable of expressing views on the subject that were well worth hearing," said Evelyn. "Besides, they are both well educated, well read, and posted on many things outside of religious matters, in which I am still worldly enough to take great interest. Consequently, that accounts for their companionship, as well as that of many others, being a pleasure and profit."

To be told that she did not understand Whitfield, and to hear Evelyn speak of him in a way that expressed a more intimate knowledge of his character, aroused Adele's ire. Her eyes flashed, and she came very near making a slurring remark, but checked herself, not, however, before Evelyn saw the disturbance her words had caused. Several times she wondered at Adele's excitable manner and lack of humor. It suddenly occurred to her now, that she was being subjected to a catechising, which perhaps had been previously planned. From that moment she was on her guard. There was certainly something mysterious about this gay society girl, which Evelyn was now more conscious of than ever before, and she determined to be extremely cautious in her conversation in the future.

"Come!" said she, changing again from grave to gay. "Tell me something about yourself, your interests, and most important of all, your health. How about your nervous condition. Have you experienced any marked improvement so far?"

Adele was cogitating. To make any more attempts to continue on the same subject, she felt, would be impracticable; besides, she had succeeded in making the discovery that Evelyn entertained something deeper than mere admiration for Whitfield. Those blushes being sufficient evidence for her.

"Oh," said she, with a start, suddenly arousing herself—"I am improving a little, I think, Miss Drayton, but not as rapidly as I had hoped. They tell me it is harder to recuperate after a nervous breakdown than any other illness, and I am thoroughly realizing that, I assure you."

CHAPTER XV.

The hotel that evening presented a very gay appearance. The broad piazzas were thronged with people, some promenading, and others sitting in groups, chatting and laughing, the majority of them waiting for the dances to begin. One of the groups was composed of Evelyn, Adele, Marie, Whitfield, Scott, and several other gentlemen.

Whitfield had called at the parsonage first, and being informed that Evelyn was at the hotel, he decided to go there. He had intended asking her to accompany him to the dance, or, if she preferred, to stroll through the grounds of the hotel, which was now quite a social feature on Saturday evenings. It was his first visit to the hotel since that memorable evening with Adele.

She greeted him most cordially, stepping toward him from the group as though sure that she was the principal object of his call. Marie, also, was more vivacious than ever, due to the presence of Scott.

When the music struck up they followed the crowd to the ballroom.

"Do you dance, Miss Drayton?" asked Whitfield.

"Occasionally," answered she, "but I rarely have the opportunity."

"You have one now, if you care to take it," said he, "and the music is delightful."

Evelyn hesitated. She was fond of dancing,

under certain circumstances, but she was not in favor of participating in it at the public affairs at the hotel, although pains were taken to make these dances as exclusive as possible. But the music was delightful, as Whitfield had said, and the temptation to participate irresistible. She finally consented, and the next minute was keeping time with her partner, to the strains of a captivating two-step. They made a fine looking couple on the floor, and attracted much attention.

To dance with Frank Whitfield, or to receive any attention from him, was considered a great honor by the young ladies of Clover Hills; consequently, there were many envious looks cast at Evelyn, who was entirely unconscious of it all. Still less conscious was she of the consternation she had caused in the group she had just left. She was like a radiantly happy child, going to her first party, giving herself up entirely to the pleasure of the moment. Never did she remember experiencing such a pleasure in a dance before.

She did not quite understand what it was, but she was conscious of late, of a keen pleasure in the very presence of Whitfield. It was as though an appeal had been made to some delicate heart strings that had never before vibrated, the weaving of a sweet mysterious influence about her.

In the meantime, a scene entirely different was being enacted among those she had left.

"Adele, look!" gasped Marie, "there goes Evelyn Drayton, dancing with Mr. Whitfield."

At the time, Adele's head was turned the other way, conversing with a gentleman. A shiver ran through her body at the words; it was like a violent shock—every nerve tingled when she turned and saw the pair going off. She had never dreamed that Evelyn even knew how to dance, to begin with; then that Whitfield should have asked her in preference to herself was more than she was able to bear with composure. All her newly-found hopes and interpretations were blasted on the instant. Yes, she had been mistaken after all; especially as she had noted, since Whitfield's arrival, his cool, distant manner toward her, and his pronounced attentions to Evelyn.

"What do you think of that for inconsistency? I would not have believed it, had I not seen it with my own eyes," said Marie, giving Adele a sly nudge, and gloating inwardly over the fact that an opportunity had presented itself to lower her rival in the eyes of others.

"Nor I!" snapped Adele, thrilling with suppressed excitement. "And her pretending to be so good!"

"Why, it is no surprise to me," remarked a Mr. Harvey, wondering at the unusual agitation of Adele and Marie over such a small matter. "I always knew that Miss Drayton danced, though true it is, she may not indulge very frequently in the pastime, nor have I ever seen her dance at the hotel before."

"She is the most peculiar combination I ever met. I have come to the conclusion that she is a hypo-

crite!" choked Adele. "The idea of her preaching a sermon, and then dancing in a ballroom, embraced by a gentleman!"

"If it is wrong for her, Miss Kingsley, it is wrong for you, and every other young lady who dances," retorted Scott, his eyes blazing with anger.

"I don't agree with you!" contradicted Adele sharply. "I don't profess to be what Miss Drayton does—if so, I certainly would not dance!"

"Even so, your argument doesn't hold good. What one professes, or does not profess, is no excuse for a wrong or sinful act. Therefore I repeat, that if it is wrong for Miss Drayton to dance, it is wrong for every other young woman."

By this time Adele was trembling with nervous excitement.

"It is a fortunate thing that people see things differently in this world," she cried excitedly, with a derisive laugh. "But it doesn't alter the fact one particle, that Evelyn Drayton is a hypocrite, and covers her weaknesses in the garments of piety."

"That is not only most unkind, but absolutely false, Miss Kingsley!" said Scott, with flushed face and flashing eyes. "Such an epithet as hypocrite can never be applied to Miss Drayton—and remember that the young lady in question is your guest."

"It is the truth," declared Adele in a stifled voice. Why, this very day, didn't she tell me she just doted on dress and jewelry; that she loved the world, and fashionable people—even going so far as to envy the dress I had on, and the girdle, and longed to

possess them! Oh, if you could have heard her, you would not stand there so ready to be her champion! I see it all—it is an art she has acquired, this talking so glibly, and preaching sermons—all a mere subterfuge, a—”

“This unjust tirade shall not continue any longer in my presence!” interrupted Scott, “you have either been incapable of understanding Miss Drayton in expressing her views, or else it is that you entertain some hidden reason for this unfounded criticism. Come,” said he, turning to Marie, “let us go out on the piazza—the atmosphere here is unbearable.”

Before Adele had a chance to reply to this, the two were on their way out of the room.

Between her anger and jealousy, Adele could not trust herself to speak immediately; she sat, breathing hard, and tapping her knee with her beautiful fan of lace and silver.

“You certainly are to be excused, Miss Kingsley, if you are not well acquainted with Miss Drayton,” said a Mr. Nixon, who was one of the group, and a stranger in Clover Hills, meeting Evelyn for the first time that evening.

“Of course, entirely excusable, under the circumstances,” agreed Mr. Harvey, anxious to gain Adele’s good-will, after his efforts for a week past to be introduced. “You have simply been laboring under a false impression, Miss Kingsley. One frequently makes mistakes in judging people. I might have thought the same, did I not know Miss Drayton so well.”

Adele was still smarting under the sting of Scott's words. Never had she been so humiliated—never so grossly insulted. She scarcely heard what the two gentlemen said. Worse even than this, was the thought, that it had been possible for her to so lower her dignity. Never before had she ever lost control of herself in that manner. She began to question her very sanity.

"And he calls himself a gentleman!" she blurted out, with Scott still in mind. Try as she would, she could not hide her agitation. The whole affair had thrown her into a sort of nervous convulsion, and she suddenly realized that it would never do for Whitfield and Evelyn to find her in this condition.

"Gentlemen, I appreciate your kindness and courtesy in this unpleasant affair this evening," she said, rising, to the surprise of both gentlemen. "But I must beg you to excuse me. I am feeling quite ill—this excitement has been too much for me. I am under the doctor's care, you know, a victim of that distressing ailment, nervous prostration, and it doesn't take much to agitate me. It is very childish in me to act this way, I acknowledge, but at the least excitement, my nerves seem to get the better of me."

The gentlemen assured her of their sympathy, and were profuse in their attentions, escorting her to the elevator, one on each side.

"I may be mistaken, and I hope I am, in changing my opinion of Miss Drayton. I had taken such a fancy to her, and this seemed to be a climax to many

things that occurred to-day, forcing me to change my whole idea of her character! The disappointment has completely unnerved me," she explained in a trembling, husky voice.

Neither of the gentlemen doubted her sincerity, for her face was now ashen and her body every now and then shook convulsively, as they slowly walked up the long hall toward the elevator. They both decided that her condition must be a very serious one, to be so affected by such a trivial matter.

"Let me assure you, Miss Kingsley, that Miss Drayton is everything that you had at first thought her," said Mr. Harvey. "And there is no reason whatever for you to change your good opinion of her. I have known her for several years, and can truly say that she is the most sincere young woman I have ever met. The impressions you have gotten to-day are absolutely false."

Adele winced. It only heaped fuel on the fire to hear Evelyn lauded.

"Oh, I am so glad to hear it! When I see you again, perhaps you can explain away all these contradictions in what I at first imagined was a most exemplary character. I depend on your honor in not permitting this unpleasant affair to go any farther, gentlemen, and I will be greatly obliged if you will tell Mr. Whitfield and Miss Drayton that I was taken suddenly ill with one of my nervous attacks—they will understand. Had I been well, this never would have happened."

They saw her safely in the elevator, and bade her

good-night, with assurances of their confidence, and delivering the message as directed. They had taken only a few steps toward the ballroom when they met Whitfield and Evelyn, who expressed great surprise on hearing of Adele's sudden indisposition.

Evelyn immediately excused herself, and went up to Adele's apartments, but it was only to be refused admittance by Hannah, who informed her, with tears in her eyes, that Miss Kingsley begged to be excused, as she was too ill to talk.

"Is there anything at all that I can do?" asked Evelyn.

"Nothing at all. She tells me there's no remedy for these spells but to keep quiet until they pass over," answered Hannah. "I'm afraid, Miss Drayton, it's doing her no good here—" her voice tremulous with emotion.

"I am very sorry, indeed, and I regret that I can be of no assistance. Tell her, please, and that I have had a most enjoyable visit up to this time. I will call in the morning, and hope to find her greatly improved, if not entirely recovered."

With these words Evelyn stepped into the room and put on her hat, and after a few more words with Hannah she hurried off, joining Whitfield in the exchange.

"Why, you don't intend to leave?" said he. "I was in hopes that you would give me the pleasure of another dance."

"Thank you, but under the circumstances I think I would prefer to go," said Evelyn.

"How did you find Miss Kingsley?" asked he.

"I did not see her. Hannah informed me that she was not able to talk, and begged me to excuse her."

Whitfield gave a little grunt and bit his lip, but said nothing.

"Just wait a minute, Miss Drayton, until I get my hat."

"Please do not leave on my account, Mr. Whitfield!" said she, laying a detaining hand on his arm. "I am accustomed to going about alone, and it is only a short walk."

"Just as though I would see you go trotting off alone!" laughed he. "I have no desire to remain longer, if you go."

They found Scott and Marie on the piazza, and after a little chat took their departure. Scott's eyes followed Evelyn with a look that made Marie wince. "He is in love with her," she thought; "there is no doubting it."

In the meantime, the unhappy girl, the spoiled beauty, was in truth experiencing a genuine nervous attack. She grew hot and cold by turns; her head throbbed violently, and her heart palpitated at intervals as though it would burst.

After Hannah had changed the gay attire of her young mistress for a silk dressing-gown, Adele requested her to leave the room. The instant she had departed, she bolted the doors, and stationed herself by one of the front windows to watch for Evelyn. She looked more like a maniac than a sane being,

with her flushed face, wild eyes, and long thick black hair falling over her neck and shoulders.

"Fool, fool that I am!" she choked. "That I should allow this girl so to control me! Her influence is like that of some sorceress—I cannot bear to look at her, to hear her name. It is no jest now—my nerves are giving way under the strain. I no sooner think I have solved the conundrum, when I suddenly find myself at sea again. If it is not as I had imagined, what is it then? How can he treat me so, if he loves me? Oh, if I only could have remained downstairs, only could have controlled myself. There is certainly something radically wrong with me to act as I did to-night."

She laughed hoarsely, hysterically, as these thoughts surged through her brain.

Ah, there they are now! Of course he would accompany her home—I might have known it. But I have one consolation at least! He will have no more doubts as to my nervous condition, to leave them all at such a time. How dared she come between us—the little minx?" she hissed, shaking her fist toward the two, while with the other hand she snatched at the white lace curtain, and held it back to get a better view. "I wonder if it could be that he is in doubt which of us to choose! But I have the best of her—unless he proposes before he sails!" she chuckled. "Artful, deceitful little hypocrite! I'll get even with you yet, and teach you once for all that it is no easy proposition when it comes to playing your cunning tricks on me!"

As they passed out of sight Adele's face turned ashen again, and her whole frame shook convulsively. She made direct for the bureau drawer, and snatching a vial she had hidden under some clothing, she held it to her lips and took a long draught of its contents.

"I'll not submit! I'll not submit!" she cried in a stifled voice, pacing the floor, laughing and crying alternately, until finally from sheer exhaustion she threw herself on the bed, disgusted with herself, humiliated, and yet totally unable to control the insane jealousy that was growing in its intensity every day.

Soon a numbness began to creep over her; the tense nerves relaxed, and the cause of all this mental anguish gradually faded from her brain. She gave a little shiver, and all was oblivion.

CHAPTER XVI.

On the way home Evelyn was somewhat agitated by many confusing thoughts, and was conscious of a deep mystery weaving itself about the young woman with whom she had dined, whose actions were very peculiar, to say the least. She had noted Whitfield's lack of sympathy and interest in her, which she could not account for, after rumors she had heard. He showed no inclination to talk of her, and Evelyn dropped the subject.

It was only half-past nine when they entered the house. At Whitfield's suggestion they seated themselves on the back verandah.

"This is just what I have been hoping for, this evening, Miss Drayton," he said, "to see you alone, as this may be our last talk for an indefinite time. When I came to Clover Hills it was very uncertain how long I would remain, but recently circumstances have so shaped themselves, that it is desirable for me to sail for England at once."

This news was so very unexpected that it gave Evelyn quite a little shock. It was as though her sky had suddenly become darkened by the consciousness of the painful loss of something beautiful that had just entered her life, giving it a new meaning, a new pleasure. In her childlike simplicity, she came very near expressing her surprise and regret with a fervor that would have caused Whitfield to

open his eyes. Fortunately, her maidenly modesty came to her rescue just in time to check the outburst her heart had dictated. The narrow escape she made, sent the blood to her face with a rush.

She congratulated herself on her good fortune, in being in a light that was not sufficient to reveal the blushes. And Whitfield never guessed the tumult his words had caused, when she answered with outward composure:

"I am very much surprised, Mr. Whitfield. I did not think you would be leaving Clover Hills for some time yet."

"For many reasons I regret to leave it at the present time—not the least of them being the interruption to our little talks, and all that they are doing to assist a poor wayward mortal like myself on his way to perfection," laughed he. "But, if you are willing, why not continue them by letter?"

"If you really desire it, Mr. Whitfield, I shall take great pleasure in exchanging views on any religious topic you may care to discuss."

"Please don't put it in that way! I am looking at the matter from another standpoint," said he, suddenly growing very serious. "You have found the way to your soul's salvation, while I am still seeking mine; consequently, I feel that your views are the only ones that are worth hearing. You are walking in the light, while I am still groping in the darkness."

"The light that I have discovered, Mr. Whitfield, has been through faith alone; faith in the assurance

that 'the Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth.' Without faith, we can, of course, gain nothing."

"I realize that fully," returned he. "And yet, what a difficult thing it seems, to obtain such faith as yours, to be willing to accept so much that cannot be understood."

"I think many people have a wrong idea of what faith really is, Mr. Whitfield. It is not simply believing and accepting, but in the full sense of the word, means submission of the whole being to the will of God."

"I see. But even so, how difficult to surrender one's self entirely to that will!"

"Yes, because carnal things wield such a power over us. Even the staunchest Christian must continually fight, for sin is never dead within us. But the fight is ever victorious, if we always keep looking unto Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith."

"I understand," said Whitfield. "The two forces, the spiritual and carnal, must ever be conflicting with each other for supremacy in every human heart; and especially noticeable is the conflict when we begin to recognize the higher law that is constantly appealing to us—the Spirit of God, in fact. I have discovered this by my own personal experience. Ever since I have begun to think about these things, I have been reminded forcibly of that inner conflict."

"It is always so, when the conscience has become

awakened, Mr. Whitfield, and we endeavor to lift ourselves upward."

The young man nodded gravely.

"Do you know," said he, after a pause, "I have frequently taken a moral man for a deeply religious one, and have been surprised on discovering that he was in reality not religious at all?"

"That is not so surprising, Mr. Whitfield, because to all outward appearances he is. You see, the difference is simply this. The moral man is not looking on the good qualities which he aims to acquire, as a means to any further end than what he may gain here; whereas the Christian strives to guide his life and obey man's laws, just according to how he can make them subservient to the Divine, and his eternal welfare."

Whitfield raised his great brown eyes to hers in a dreamy intensity.

"I wonder," said he, "how many men are living with that aim in view!"

"Not very many, I'm afraid," returned Evelyn. "Nor women either. Of course, to accomplish this, there must in the first place be love for God, which springs from faith in the heart. Faith, hope, and love, are essentials of the Christian faith, without which it could not exist."

"That reminds me, Miss Drayton, of an article I read only yesterday, the opinion of a very able thinker. He said the difference between the spiritual and the merely moral man is simply the difference between the Organic and Inorganic, and that moral

beauty is the product of the natural man, while spiritual beauty is the product of the spiritual man; and that the man of a fine moral character is the highest achievement of the organic kingdom, while the spiritual man would be the lowest form of life in the spiritual world."

"A splendid definition!" said Evelyn. "I think the moral standard of a person can be readily judged by the degree in which he sympathizes with his fellow men."

"Invariably," returned Whitfield. "Changing subjects—I would like very much to hear your views on dancing."

In an instant Evelyn's face changed from grave to gay. The dimples played about her mouth, and her eyes twinkled as she asked:

"Were you shocked that I should have indulged in such a worldly pleasure?"

"No, not at all, but I must confess I hardly expected it—and yet, when you started in, it seemed the most natural thing in the world."

At this, Evelyn broke into merry laughter, the infection of which Whitfield caught.

"So you think, then, that I am perfectly at home in the frivolities of the world, even though I do make some pretence of living above them?"

"Yes, I think you are as much at home in the dance as in the pulpit," laughed Whitfield, in playful repartee.

"Well, now, I hardly know whether that would be considered anything to my credit or not," said Evelyn.

"According to my idea, it is greatly to your credit, Miss Drayton, that you are not unhealthily religious. I respect religion, but I have no sympathy whatever for these long-faced, sanctimonious creatures; who are so straight-laced that they are afraid even to laugh, and frequently look upon the most simple pleasures as sinful indulgences. To my mind, there are many people whose idea of religion is a perverted one. No doubt many are sincere, and will get their reward; but I say, if you are going to serve the Lord, serve him with gladness, though I admit it may be advisable to serve him in sorrow, than not to serve him at all."

Evelyn's blue eyes lighted up.

"That is just it," said she. "The question is to serve Him; how we do it is of course according to the lights of each professing Christian, his peculiar characteristics and temperament. The trouble with many professing Christians, I think, is that they possess all of the virtues, but few, if any, of the graces; consequently they do not appeal to people in general, and are frequently misjudged. But to go back to dancing. That is a subject about which I have been giving considerable thought of late. I acknowledge that I do enjoy a little dance occasionally under the proper conditions; but the question is with me, just where the line should be drawn. I am not in the habit of dancing at the hotel, but I confess it was a temptation this evening, to indulge a little in the pastime, and I simply gave way to it."

"The round dance is what makes it objectionable

to you, I suppose, and I can but agree with you," said Whitfield. "There is certainly great room for reform in the present style of dancing. So far as I am personally concerned, however, I do not care particularly about it, and I do not think I would miss it, were I deprived of it altogether."

"Nor I, Mr. Whitfield, though there is something that arouses the desire when one hears some captivating music."

"Oh, I know," laughed he, "just as it was with us both this evening."

It was nearly eleven o'clock when Whitfield reluctantly rose to take his leave; and as he took Evelyn's hand, and pressed it warmly, he felt a strong desire to raise it to his lips.

"I cannot tell you what I feel in saying good-by to you to-night," said he. "Your companionship, these few weeks, Miss Drayton, has been to me unlike that of any other, and to part now is a loss on my part which I feel can never be filled. I hope, however, that you will keep your promise to write. Your letters will compensate, in a small measure at least. I promise not to forget your instructions," he added, thinking he interpreted her thoughts as she gazed at him for an instant with a sad, far-away, questioning look. "And I will make every effort, so that some day, perhaps, I may be able to do my instructor credit."

Evelyn followed him all the way to the door, and wondered why her heart beat so rapidly; why her throat felt so contracted, and her lips to quiver

like those of a little child who tries to hold back the desire to cry. She wondered, too, why she felt so supremely happy, and at the same time so strangely sad. It took all the will power of which she was capable to hide her agitation, as she said:

"Thank you, Mr. Whitfield, but I feel that the loss will all be mine."

Her voice sounded strangely unnatural to herself. She cleared her throat, and hoped he did not notice it. Her eyes were glistening with tears held back.

Just a few more words, and he had gone. She closed the door softly, and stood like one dazed.

A footstep in the hall aroused her. It was Betsy, who always insisted on waiting up for the girls and locking the house for the night.

"Laws-a-massy, honey, don't stop to help me!" said she, when Evelyn, listless and preoccupied, started to assist in closing the shutters. "Go up-styars an' tek off yo' cloze an' go t' bed. Dat gen'l'man stay 'roun' late dis evenin', didn't he, honey?"—with a broad grin and little chuckle. "I'll bet deah ain' no udder gen'l'man in de worl' dat kin beat him talkin'—ain' dat yo' 'sperience? Kase when folks talks 'bout somethin' worth lissenin' to, dey fo'git all 'bout how times flies. Now some folks, yo' know, has tongues dat clack-clack from mornin' twel night, 'nough to tek yo' bref away, but nurver say a word of sense—laik dat Mr. Haines f' rinstance, who comes t' see yo'—he's no good talkin', chile! 'Pon my word, I doan know what he comes prowlin' 'roun' heah for anyhow! He's got

sech fool ways, an' last week I's tuk t' notice dat he cum two nights in susception."

Evelyn had finished with the window, in the meantime, and was walking toward the stairs. Betsy turned and looked after her.

"There's somethin' wrong wid ma pet!" she thought. "Chile, chile!" she called, hurrying after her. "Yo' look weak an' tired—is yo' sick? I ain' seed yo' face laik dat in a coon's age."

"Why, Betsy, how foolish you do talk!" said Evelyn, for the first time realizing the situation. "I was only very busy with my thoughts, and did not notice what you were saying."

She turned on the stairway, which she had just started to climb, and leaning over laid her hands on Betsy's shoulders.

"Good-night, Mammy! You see, I am going to obey, and leave the rest of the locking-up to you."

"I 'clar t' goodness, ef she ain' actin' some new caper!" thought Betsy, retracing her steps as Evelyn ran lightly up the stairs. "I'se beginnin' to suspicionate dat my chile is on de brink ob fallin' in lub," mused she, "'case it al-ays meks yo' act sort o' still laik, jes' 'zactly as she is doin' now. Well, he cyarnt do better—I's sho' 'bout dat. Ef I ondly wus sho' dat de disease had hol' ob his heart at de same time, I wud praise de Lawd fo' one 'hol' day, 'caze he's de berry one I's picked out fo' dat chile. Some ob dem udder rascallians dat cum scootin' 'roun' heah will soon fine out who's which an' what's who, or else I'se gwinter be berry much mistook."

In the meantime, Evelyn had entered her room. She did not care for a light, but sat down by the open window and gazed up at the starlit sky, absorbed in thought.

Never before had she been so peculiarly disturbed. She was conscious of a great drop in her spirits, and the world was singularly empty, but at the same time, there existed also a mysterious happiness, some new awakening she hardly understood, that seemed to pervade every fiber of her being.

She was dazed, perplexed, unstrung; her brain reeled as though under the influence of some powerful charm, coupled with an overwhelming sadness, as though something at her heart had been torn asunder, and left it wounded and bleeding.

Gradually she began to regain her equilibrium; her brain cleared, and she attempted to reason it all out.

"Never in my life have I felt like this in parting with anyone! And why is it?" she asked herself. "Because I have never before met anyone in whose company I have experienced such a delightful companionship. Yes, of all my friends and acquaintances, there is not one who has filled the place that he has. Friend, did I say?" she further questioned, her whole face lighting up. "No—that is not the word—he is more than friend to me. What is it then? Can it—can it—be—love?"

For a few seconds she gazed steadily at the stars as though seeking the answer from them.

Suddenly it came; and she dropped her head between her arms, that were outstretched on the sill,

and burst into tears. Ah, yes, there was no doubting it—she loved him as she had never before loved anyone; and he had gone—left her for an indefinite time, perhaps forever.

After a little while she raised her head and smiled through the tears; it was in recollection of a question she had asked her mother not long since. How one could tell, when in love with a man well enough to marry him, and her reply she remembered so well. “When you would be ready to make any sacrifice for him, and be willing to leave home and friends for a far distant country, if necessary.”

“And would I be willing to do this for him?” The answer was not long in coming, for almost immediately she lowered her head again to hide the blushes, even though there were none to see but the stars. “I would!—I would follow him to the ends of the earth!” she acknowledged repeatedly. “Poor father—poor dear mother—it does not seem loyal to you, but I cannot help it! I do love you dearly, but this is so different I hardly understand it yet. Let me see—what did he say?”

Now her face lights up again, as she tries to recall his last parting words.

“‘To part will be a loss on my part that can never be filled.’ Yes, that was exactly what he said!” But the next instant the smile vanished. “How ridiculous of me! Of course, he meant that with no one else could he talk on religious topics with the same satisfaction. On this account alone he has

been drawn to me, ever since I took father's place in the pulpit that evening. I must not forget that I am really nothing more to him than a friend, and never will be; consequently I must school myself not to dwell too much on this beautiful dream, if it really is love. Strange that I never realized just what he was to me until I heard of his leaving!"

Her face now grew deeply serious. She turned her eyes again to the stars, the tears still glistening on her lashes.

"My Father," she silently prayed—"I thank Thee for this happiness. I would not have been without the knowledge of it, even though I know that it is not possible for him to be anything nearer to me than a friend. I pray Thee to help me realize this, so that it will not absorb my thoughts nor influence me in any way, to cause me to be sad over the separation; but help me, rather to take a keener interest in all the plans I have made for the coming winter, that I may be able to give comfort and happiness to those depending on me."

The sweet face became illumined as she prayed, and when she ceased, she still sat quietly for a few minutes, calm and peaceful, as though the prayer had already been answered and she had received strength to control this new-found joy that was so mingled with sadness.

"This secret shall never be divulged," she decided, rising and beginning her preparations for bed. "I could never make such a delicate secret of the heart common property!" And as she questioned her-

self further, felt that it would be impossible for her to reveal it even to her parents.

"It is a very sacred thing," she thought, "and must always remain between my God and me."

CHAPTER XVII.

The next morning, before services, Evelyn started for the Hotel Elberon, carrying a large bunch of flowers for Adele, which she had cut from those growing in their own garden.

On arriving there, the clerk informed her that Miss Kingsley and her maid had left for New York on the eight o'clock train.

"Miss Adele Kingsley! Are you sure?" asked she in surprise.

The clerk smiled.

"I am positive," answered he. "I saw them go. Is this Miss Drayton?"

Evelyn nodded. She looked blank and disconcerted.

"Miss Anderson left word at the desk, if you called this morning, to send you up to her room," he informed her.

"Oh," said she, coming to herself, "I suppose she will explain. I will go right up."

"Come in!" called Marie, in answer to Evelyn's knock.

The door opened, and Marie stepped forward in a manner so reserved, so haughty, that Evelyn's pleasant words of greeting froze on her lips; in place of which she simply said:

"Good morning, Miss Anderson. I believe you wanted to see me?"

"Yes; be seated, please, Miss Drayton," returned Marie, icily. "Miss Kingsley desired me to explain to you about her sudden departure. Some urgent business has called her to New York, and she took the eight o'clock train, because it was the only express, I believe, to-day. She requested me to tell you that she regretted very much not having another opportunity to see you before she left."

"I, too, am very sorry to have missed her," said Evelyn, watching Marie closely, completely mystified by her manner. "I have been so anxious about her since last evening. Did she recover entirely from her nervous attack before leaving?"

"She had improved sufficiently to be able to leave, but she is a very sick young woman. I, too, have been suffering from the effects of a nervous breakdown, as I believe I told you, but Miss Kingsley's condition, I think, is more serious than mine.

"These nervous seizures must be terrible. I suppose the excitement in the ballroom was too much for her," said Evelyn.

"Well, it was not that altogether. She is apt to lose control of herself at any time, but especially when suddenly frightened or agitated. The least shock—a sudden joy, a sorrow, and even a great disappointment, is liable to throw her into one of these nervous convulsions."

"To what did she attribute last night's attack?" asked Evelyn.

"A great disappointment."

"A great disappointment?" echoed Evelyn, her

eyes opening wide. "Oh, I am so sorry! Was it of vital importance?"

"I don't know that you would call it vital," said Marie, "though with her it was a serious enough matter to bring on the attack."

"How unfortunate!"

"Yes, very," sighed Marie. "It is greatly to be deplored that she should, just at this time, meet with such a great disappointment in a person for whom she had entertained the highest respect, and of whom she was learning to be very fond."

"Was it a gentleman or lady?" inquired Evelyn.

"It was yourself, Miss Drayton."

"What—I!" cried Evelyn. "Do explain yourself, Miss Anderson."

"It was when you got up to dance."

"When I got up to dance?" repeated she. "What could that possibly have to do with it? Did I cut such a ridiculous figure on the floor?"

"I cannot imagine that you are as innocent as you appear," said Marie with a look of disdain, ready now to start the fight in earnest, and carry out the little scheme Adele and she had planned—to lower the pride of Evelyn Drayton, if possible, not only in denouncing her in person, as a hypocrite, but to circulate the talk generally of her inconsistency as a professing Christian.

"Now is your chance, Marie, to humiliate this little conceited saint," Adele had said in parting. "Be tactful, and use to the very best advantage all those remarks of hers, and let it be understood

that she had nearly converted us, when we suddenly discovered things in her behavior and conversation that we considered not in accordance at all with the high principles of a professing Christian."

"Miss Anderson, I fail completely to understand you," said Evelyn with great dignity. "I cannot conceive why the mere fact of my dancing should throw Miss Kingsley into a nervous convulsion."

"Evidently, then, you are not aware that it is most inconsistent for one of your apparent religious standing to dance in a ballroom," spoke up Marie with cutting sarcasm. "You, who pretend to be such an exemplary Christian."

Marie was now in a highly excited state. All the pent-up emotion for months seemed to find an outlet in denouncing the one she looked upon as the destroyer of her happiness, for she was as sure in her own heart that Scott was secretly in love with the clergyman's daughter as Adele was of Whitfield's being in love with her.

Those stinging words of Scott's to Adele, in his defence of Evelyn, still vibrated in her ears. She could not forget them; they indicated to her without a doubt something far deeper than mere admiration for Evelyn. Like Adele, her jealousy was so great she hated Evelyn for this cause alone, and now she realized that her opportunity had come for revenge.

By this time Evelyn had concluded that her suspicions of the two young women had been well founded. It was very clear to her now, that for

some reason yet undiscovered, she was the object of a plot of some kind; and determined there and then not to leave the room until she had sifted the mysterious affair to the bottom.

"Please compose yourself, Miss Anderson, before you go any farther into the matter," she said with quiet dignity. "There is surely no cause, so far as I can see, for such a disturbance. I cannot imagine that a mere dance could possibly cause such a revulsion of feeling against me."

So self-possessed had Evelyn become by this time, so sweet and trustful was the face she lifted to Marie's, that for a moment Marie turned her head as though she could not meet the gaze of the beautiful eyes, bent so steadily upon her.

There was a pause. Evelyn leaned over closer. "Do you honestly think, Miss Anderson, that in dancing last evening I committed a great wrong?"

"I certainly do, for one of your standing," retorted Marie, though it was very evident that she was cooling down somewhat under the magnetic influence of Evelyn's manner, which she could not understand. She was beginning already to regret the step she had taken, but felt it was too late now to back out.

"Then I am indeed sorry, and regret exceedingly that you should take such a view of my taking part in that little pleasure of only a few minutes. I don't often dance, and never did I do so before at the hotel. I have been willing to be guided in this matter as in all others, and up to this time it has

never before been borne in on my conscience that there could be any harm in dancing under the right circumstances; but now, while listening to your criticism, I have experienced a revulsion of feeling against it, and against any pleasure to which any one could take exception, whether justly or unjustly. I do love a little dance occasionally; but if it is harmful to any one, if it causes any one to stumble, I will rejoice in surrendering it."

There was an uncomfortable silence for a minute. Marie looked confused; she was in fact beginning to feel embarrassed.

Evelyn made a striking contrast to the angry fashionable young woman beside her, for in all her simplicity of manner and calm demeanor there existed a strength of which the other knew nothing, as she sat with clenched hands and flushed face, with angry darts flashing from her eyes like fire sparks. By virtue of her spiritual strength, Evelyn towered high above this gay young woman of the world.

Marie gave a little shiver when Evelyn suddenly leaned over and took her hand.

"Miss Anderson," said she earnestly, with a slight tremor in her voice, "that dance is not the real cause of all this agitation of yours—I feel it. Let me hear what it is. I must know what I have done to gain the ill-will of you and Miss Kingsley. Let me hear the true reason, for I am sure it is of much more importance than a mere dance. If you must fight, let it at least be a fair one, and give me a chance to clear myself. I am confident that you are laboring under some false impression."

Marie never could have told how it happened: without the slightest warning she suddenly burst into a flood of tears.

"Forgive me—forgive me!" she cried convulsively. "I don't know what I am doing to treat you in this way! But Alfred Scott is my husband, and cannot marry you, nor any other woman. I will not permit it. I swear it! He has deceived me, treated me outrageously, and I have been brooding over it until I am almost insane. I have been jealous of you, as I would be of any woman to whom he paid any attention, for how could I tell where it would end? In the sight of God he belongs to me—me! and I shall follow him to the end of the earth, and warn any woman who may be in danger of falling in love with him!"

Evelyn gave a little gasp. The suddenness of it all took her breath, but she quickly collected herself.

"I never dreamed of Mr. Scott's being married," said she. "And is he really your husband?" hardly comprehending the full import of Marie's words.

"Yes, he is my husband, Miss Drayton," sobbed Marie, piteously. "That is, in the sight of God he is, as I said before, although according to man's law, the marriage would not be looked upon as legal."

"Miss Anderson!"

"Oh, I am not at all surprised that you are horrified!" she choked. "For what do you know of the world and its temptations, shielded and reared as you have been, hearing only of things pure and

good, your associations being principally among those who live by the same high ideals as you do? No, no, I do not blame you; what else could you have for one like me but scorn? Do you object to hearing my story?"

"Not if you think it would give you any comfort to confide it to me."

"I know that it would—for some reason I long to open my heart to one whom I feel I could trust. The time has come when I must do this or I shall go mad. I feel so differently toward you now, Miss Drayton; in fact, I know that in reality I have always respected and admired you, yes, and even loved you, but my jealousy and heart-sorrow had poisoned my mind against you—made a perfect fiend of me, a most unnatural woman. Actually there were times when I have hardly been rational. It was three years ago when it all happened, and I was so young, only nineteen," Marie continued, with a deep sigh. "Alfred was still going to college at the time. One day he asked me to take dinner with him and several of his friends at a restaurant, and succeeded in getting me to take more liquor than was good for me. I was really not myself, and when he proposed getting married that very day, and keeping it a secret for a time, I consented. Several months afterward I discovered it was only a mock marriage—planned by him and his friends. In the condition that I was in at the time, I never thought of the certificate, and when I asked him for it, he laughed and said there

was none. But when I upbraided him for his terrible act he promised to marry me publicly and honorably, but he kept putting it off with all sorts of excuses. What was I to do, Miss Drayton? I could not prove to the world that I was married, and I had no other hope than that of persuading him to keep his promise."

"Shameful! I never imagined that Mr. Scott could be capable of stooping to anything so base," said Evelyn, indignantly. The very thought of that young man was now repulsive to her, and she wondered how it would be possible for her even to notice him again.

"You don't know the world, Miss Drayton. I have no faith in any man."

"Don't say that. It is not fair to judge the whole world by one person, or even a larger number," said Evelyn.

"I cannot help it! My life is ruined, my honor gone . . . I would sooner die than live. I have lost all interest in the world and everybody. My life has been a dismal failure. If I had been the woman I should have been, it would not have been possible for Alfred Scott, nor any other man, to succeed in overpowering me with liquor in order to make me a ready dupe in his hands. Indeed, I have been a wicked woman, Miss Drayton, and to-day life is only a blank."

"Do not speak so, Miss Anderson. No matter what you have done, you are too young to give up in despair."

"But what can I do with such a past?"

"Redeem it by making a future out of it. Come do not be discouraged. You have seen your error and regret it. Now use it as a stepping stone to something better."

Marie shook her head. "I'm afraid I'm beyond redemption. I see nothing ahead to encourage me. Alfred has evidently ceased to care anything for me at all; he rarely calls to see me now, and when he does, it is only to continue his persuasions to an amicable arrangement, and get my consent to permit him to go his way in peace, advising me to go mine. He has offered me a large sum of money to settle the whole affair for good. I will say this much for him," she continued, after a pause, "that had he and his friends, like myself, not been under the influence of liquor, he never would have been guilty of such an atrocious crime. He did deeply regret it afterwards."

"Oh, I am so sorry! I wish I could do something for you," said Evelyn, as Marie threw herself on the sofa, and buried her face in the pillows.

She raised her head again at Evelyn's words, and grasping her hand, she cried: "You don't love him then?"

"I have never thought of such a thing."

"Do you think he is in love with you?"

"I am sure he is not."

There was silence for a minute, while Evelyn held the hot, trembling hand firmly.

"I suppose you see that I still love him, even with

all his cruel treatment. Yes, that is the strangest part of it, Miss Drayton," she sobbed. "You do not understand."

Evelyn fell into a sudden silence. The thought of her newly-found love swept over her in a rush of joy, and there awakened in her heart at the same time a new sympathy for this misguided and remorseful young woman, although it was impossible for her to conceive how she could still love the man who had so wronged her.

I think I do understand, at least in part, thought she, leaning her head back a little to hide her face from Marie.

"I don't deserve this kindness from you," Marie began again. "You are the most magnanimous creature I have ever met. I know that you are consistent and sincere, and mean every word that you speak—it was only my insane jealousy that drove me to this treatment of you this morning. That I should be capable of acting in such a mean childish manner makes me doubt my sanity."

"I understand; don't speak of that again. I might have done the same thing under the circumstances. You have been under a great strain, I can plainly see, and can hardly be held accountable. Come now, you must not brood over it in this way," pleaded Evelyn. "I know that it is a terrible thing, I realize that fully; but it will never undo the past by allowing it to prey on your mind and undermine your health. To die, even, would not help matters a particle; but there is a way that will enable you

to outlive this trial, a way by which you can obtain peace, a way that is open to us all and from which no one is ever turned. Shall I help you to seek it?"

Never in her life had Marie come under an influence that had so controlled her, and aroused her better-self. Hope began to take the place of despair. Her selfish, aimless life rose before her in such striking contrast to that of the young girl at her side, with her staunch principles, her frank, happy nature and ready sympathy, that it stimulated in her heart the desire to throw herself at Evelyn's feet and implore her to show her the way of which she had spoken, so that she too might follow it, and seek, perhaps, some solace for her breaking heart.

"Do try to console yourself, and keep some hope still alive," coaxed Evelyn, seating herself now on the couch, and placing her arm around the trembling prostrate figure. "Mr. Scott may even yet do the right thing by you. I am not going to leave you until you promise me that you will make an effort to live down this sorrow."

"I will try," Marie answered, after a pause. "Oh, if I were only one-half as good as you, what a clear conscience I would have!" and she gazed wistfully at Evelyn through the tears.

"Thank you," returned Evelyn, with an amused smile. "You don't know me. I have my failings, my temptations and trials, just as every other woman, and it is often an ordeal to do the right thing. If it were not for the help that I must constantly depend upon, I don't know how it would be

possible for me to get along at all. I am trying to make some good use of my life, be it ever so little, but it is very hard at times."

"In other words, you are trying 'to go on unto perfection,' " said Marie, smiling now herself, for the first time.

"Did you hear that little sermon of mine?" asked Evelyn.

"I have heard about it, and from a number of people. I don't believe you know, Miss Drayton, how many hearts you stirred that night, how many sleeping consciences you awakened. Why, even Adele Kingsley was moved; she has spoken about it to me quite frequently."

"By the way, would you object to telling me the cause of that young lady's actions, now that I know the cause of yours?" asked Evelyn.

Marie hesitated.

"If you will excuse me," she said finally, "I think I will leave Miss Kingsley to fight her own battles. We have been good friends while here, and I do not feel at liberty to discuss her. I am quite sure, however, that she will see her error sooner or later, as I have mine, and make all reparation that is possible."

"Just as you feel about it, then," said Evelyn pleasantly. "I have my suspicions and if they are correct, I do feel sorry for her."

It was nearly twelve o'clock when Evelyn rose to go, having missed the morning services. Marie rose with her. "I have made you a promise, Miss Drayton; now will you make me one?"

"If it is in my power to keep it, I will."

"It ~~is~~ in your power, and it is, that you will never, by word, look, or act, give Alfred Scott the least intimation that you hold our secret. Nothing was farther from my thoughts than to reveal it to you to-day. I hardly know yet how it happened. You have then fully forgiven me for my terrible behavior?"

"Most heartily. And I promise to guard your secret carefully. Accept these as a peace offering," said Evelyn, smiling sweetly, as she pressed the large bunch of flowers, that she had brought for Adele, into Marie's hands. "I want you to come over to the house to-morrow afternoon, at four. I expect then to have a little spare time. I would like to talk further with you in regard to this trouble of yours."

"Oh, thank you," said Marie, "I will surely be there. But you are too kind to me, I don't deserve it!"

"I think differently," returned Evelyn brightly. "I am going to be your friend, and stand right by you. I don't propose to give you a chance to go back on your promise. You have a whole life before you, and you *must* make something of it."

Marie could not understand it, but she felt strangely buoyed up and encouraged by the manner and the words of the clergyman's daughter. She was incapable of seeing that the secret of Evelyn's power was in the love, the consideration she felt toward all mankind, inspired by the Spirit, and the fruit of the Spirit can be nothing but love.

CHAPTER XVIII.

That evening, greatly to Evelyn's disgust, Scott accompanied her home after services, and they seated themselves on the veranda overlooking the garden, just where she and Whitfield had sat the evening previous.

Never in her life before did Evelyn ever remember an occasion when it required such an effort to be even passably agreeable, as it did that night toward Scott. All his little attentions were abhorrent; the very sight of him repulsive to her. In manner and conversation he had always appeared the gentleman; but now his true character lay unmasked before her. Traits that she had always admired, she saw now, were simply the veneer covering a foundation that, in her estimation, could never support true manliness. "I see now, more than I ever did before, the harm in dancing," she thought. "Had I not returned home so early on Saturday evening, what would have prevented me from dancing with this man, had he asked me? I could not have well refused, after dancing with Mr. Whitfield."

"Well, for once I have managed to escape the retinue of admirers, and enjoy the privilege of seeing you entirely alone. It will compensate in a measure for your repeated refusals to drive or walk

with me," said he, drawing up his chair near to Evelyn's.

"I have told you before, that I have very few spare moments nowadays, Mr. Scott. You cannot imagine what demands there are in the house of a minister—and especially in ours, at the present time, owing to my father's ill health and the necessary preparations in view of our leaving Clover Hills in a few weeks. Then, too, my sister having gone abroad, I assume her share of domestic duties, as well as those she looked after in the church."

"Really, Miss Drayton, I do not like to think of your being tied down to such a life of toil and drudgery. In fact, I cannot understand why a young woman with your attainments should live in such obscurity. Why, do you know that with your intelligence, your tact and culture, you would create quite a furore in the social world; and capable even of being a leader in any circle.

Evelyn straightened up, and her eyes flashed. It made her almost sick with disgust to hear him talk in such a strain; but remembering her promise to Marie, she quickly controlled herself, and said, nonchalantly: "I'm afraid you will make me quite vain, if you keep on."

"Not a bit of it, not a bit of it," laughed he. "I really wish it were possible to develop enough vanity to force you from this obscurity to the sphere for which you were intended."

Evelyn laughed.

"I really mean it," insisted he. "You are wast-

ing your life, hiding your light under a bushel; and you will not deny that even the Scriptures forbid that."

"Yes," said Evelyn, changing from gay to grave. "The Scriptures do forbid hiding any talent that is given us, but I fear that you and I have not interpreted the lesson of the talents in the same way; for, in contradiction to your view of myself, I feel that the few talents that I possess could not be used to a better advantage than they are now, in the position Providence has already placed me; besides, can you tell me what compensation there would be if I did gain a foothold in society as you know it?"

"Why, of course, I can!" exclaimed he. "What greater compensation would any woman desire than the satisfaction of knowing that she is very beautiful, and sought after, and admired by the highest circles?"

"The highest circles of society! And what are they?" spoke up Evelyn with fervor. "What does the word 'society' signify to-day, and especially in our own country, but a collection of people who have more money than brains, and who spend their time in studying how they can enjoy themselves, gain notoriety, and outdo each other in lavish display, with an extravagance at times that is appalling. And those who finally succeed in gaining the entré into these so-called exclusive circles, what have they, in reality, accomplished for their own good?"

"Oh, of course, Miss Drayton, society has its drawbacks, its failings, and even its black sheep, as

everything else. I'll wager you will find them even in the church, but one must discriminate, you know, and use the privileges it offers to advantage, but not to abuse them. With you, however, there would be no danger in this respect. One such as you would be capable of reaping only what would be advantageous. Gracious me! Young people must have some pleasures; there is time enough to think of charities and missions when one grows older."

A smile of amusement crept over Evelyn's face as she said:

"I am afraid the world would suffer materially for workers if we all waited until we spent the best of our lives in riotous living. And I think, Mr. Scott, that your opinion of womankind must be at a very low ebb, if you think she is not capable of any higher aim in life than to be admired, and to shine in fashionable society. I can see no compensation whatever for the wear and tear that must necessarily be endured by a slave of society and pleasure."

"Perhaps you are right," Scott finally condescended to acknowledge. "But of course it is hard for me to see things from your viewpoint. I meant principally to convey the idea that 'all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' However," he added quickly, with a laugh, throwing Evelyn a glance of ardent admiration, "I must confess, though, that in your case it has so far not had that effect."

"Oh, thank you!" said Evelyn, laughing. "I am glad that I have at least one redeeming feature left. Yes," she sighed, in mock distress, while the

dimples quivered, "I'm afraid, Mr. Scott, your sympathy is entirely misplaced. I am simply too happy to feel the need of it."

"How beautifully innocent and pure she is!" thought he, his whole heart going out toward her in an overwhelming rush of love, a love he had been waiting for days to make known to her. But he was somewhat puzzled at her actions on this particular evening. She was not just like herself.

"I did not mean to intimate that you were not happy, Miss Drayton," said he, with a deep tenderness in his voice. "You are sunshine itself; it is only that I wish the rays were not confined to such a narrow range, but were given a chance to shine out in unlimited space so that more would have the pleasure of their influence; but not," he added, after a pause, and lowering his voice, "in exactly the same way as I have been influenced."

Evelyn started. His words, his manner, his voice, opened her eyes to a situation of which she had never dreamed. Was he about to propose? The very thought almost unnerved her. Her first impulse was to get away, to avoid it all by some manner or means; when her promise to Marie arrested her, and she settled back again with a masterful effort to hide her agitation, her indignation. They could see each other's faces only indistinctly, there being no light except what shone through the doorway from a burner turned low in the parlor.

"Is it such a surprise to you to learn that I think a great deal of you?" asked he.

"I'm afraid I do not understand," said she tremulously.

"You do not understand!" cried he in a stifled voice, drawing his chair up very close, and leaning toward her. "Oh, Evelyn, how can it be possible for you to misunderstand? Have you not noticed my growing interest in you? Have you not realized, to some extent at least, how the sunshine of your pure soul has penetrated my life, and wrought a transformation of which I never dreamed?—and, what is more, found its way to the inmost recesses of my heart, and there worked a revolution, because I never knew before what the word love signified. Have you really not seen some evidence of all this? Tell—"

His voice broke; he cleared his throat and continued huskily:

"Tell me truly—have you not noticed any evidences whatever of my true feelings toward you this summer?"

"No, Mr. Scott, I have never dreamed of this!" said she, moving off a little, striving always to keep that promise ever before her, by which her every word and act must be guided, no matter what her impulses might be.

"Never dreamed of this! How could you have been so blind? Is it because you have never experienced any response in your own heart to it all?—because you have never entertained any stronger feeling for me than that of friendship?"

"As I never have, it very likely is the reason,"

answered Evelyn as coolly as she could. "And I regret exceedingly that things have taken this turn with you, Mr. Scott."

"You surely do not mean to give me no hope! Not that, at any rate, Miss Drayton! Give me the chance to try to win your love!" he pleaded. "I have not been a religious man, I know, but with your influence there is no knowing what you might make of me. Yes, Evelyn, to seek a higher life shall be my chief aim if you will give me but one ray of hope. I know that I could gradually adapt myself to your mode of living—"

Evelyn breathed hard.

"What a hypocrite!" she thought, "to talk this way with such a past, and with no effort to make amends for the great wrong he has committed!"

Under the circumstances, she considered herself grossly insulted that he should propose; but in view of her promise to Marie she knew that it was an insult she could not resent. In fact, she must not even show displeasure, it might make him suspicious at once. It was a great ordeal, to act in such opposition to what her outraged feelings dictated.

In her efforts to control herself she did not answer immediately, and Scott continued passionately:

"Oh, Evelyn, do give me some little hope, for with you rests not only my happiness, but the salvation of my soul as well!"

This proved to be too much for Evelyn in her present state of emotion. That he should place the burden of his soul upon her shoulders aroused her

indignation to such a pitch that she did not even attempt to control the outburst that followed.

"Do not talk so, Mr. Scott, I beg of you!" said she in a choking voice, her face flushing crimson. "You do not realize what you say, giving me, a poor weak mortal, such a responsibility. There is only One who is able to save. It is just as necessary for me, as it is for you or any of God's creatures, to seek guidance from Him alone for the welfare of the soul. I am depending on that guidance every day to keep my own feet from stumbling, and if you desire to seek a better life, I can only urge you to seek the same."

Scott fell into a sudden silence. He could not help but feel the effect of her words and the influence of her personality. After a pause he looked up, and met her eyes full upon him. They had by this time become accustomed to the partial darkness, and their faces had grown more distinct to each other.

"Of what avail, then, is Christianity, if it cannot influence others by the example of its followers?" asked he with a sudden calmness of manner.

"You misunderstand me, or perhaps I you, Mr. Scott. What I mean is this, that no living mortal of himself is able to save. The way can be pointed out of course, but only the love of God can save."

Scott settled back, with a far-away expression, as though dreaming. There was a long pause, when he finally turned, and in a manner altogether different, said quietly:

"I feel that you are right, Miss Drayton. I understand. My soul's salvation lies between me and my Maker, and to desire to marry you without a return of love, I also feel now, is simply unworthy of any honorable man."

CHAPTER XIX.

Evelyn gave a sigh of relief at the turn things had taken, though she could not divine the cause of the sudden change in Scott's attitude toward her, unless it was that he had suddenly made up his mind to accept things philosophically, and resign himself graciously to his fate.

"I suppose your idea of marriage is only where there is an absolute affinity between two natures," said he, after a long silence.

"Yes," answered she, contemplatively. "I do think that there should exist a peculiar sympathy between two natures, drawing one to the other with more or less magnetic power, in order to make an ideally happy union."

As she said this she thought of Whitfield—for had she not been conscious of a mysteriously beautiful sympathy existing between him and herself? Her heart quickened at the thought, and her eyes glowed as with some inward deep joy. She gave a little cough, and cleared her throat.

"I'm afraid you have taken cold," said Scott, rising. "Perhaps the night air is a little too damp; suppose we go inside."

"I think it would be advisable," agreed she, stepping into the room and turning the light up higher, glad that an opportunity had presented itself to regain her composure.

"Speaking in a general way, I have at times had just such experiences," said he, as they seated themselves. "Scientifically, you know, there are many substances that will unite, and others that are bound to separate because there is no affinity between them; and so it is, I suppose, in life. There are natures which are absolutely foreign to others; consequently, there cannot exist an affinity of one for the other."

"So, then, a certain combination of characteristics between two persons would naturally, I think, make a complete and perfectly harmonious union," said Evelyn, her eyes still glowing, and a far-off look appearing in them.

"I'm afraid there are very few who experience that absolute affinity when contemplating marriage," said Scott; "few, I am sure, who look upon the union as I imagine you do. The world would be better, no doubt, if more were capable of doing so. If you knew the world as I do, Miss Drayton, you would be shocked at the perverted idea that prevails regarding marriage and love. But you, as well as all other good women, should have consideration for those who have not had the opportunity, perhaps, to be influenced by a higher and purer sense of love; for what do you know of the wickedness in the world, or of the influences that beset a man, the temptations that lure him on every side?"

Scott leaned back in the chair and brushed his hand across his eyes, as though to wipe away some unpleasant picture that had arisen before his mental

vision; then he stared intently at the carpet. Evidently a great change had come over him. Evelyn never saw him so serious. She wondered if his conscience had suddenly been awakened, and if it were possible that he could be experiencing remorse in making her a proposal; and so she studied him closely—he was becoming now an interesting subject.

“True it is, Mr. Scott, I may not know very much of the world as you see it, but I have often wondered at this,” she ventured, “why we will induce others to sin. What we do that harms only ourselves does not carry the same weight that it does when we aim at the same time to drag another down with us, using every artifice of which we are capable to accomplish the ruin of another. A man who is capable of descending so low is not worthy of the name of man—he can be classed only with the lower animals, and is a slave of Satan’s.”

Scott shuddered, every word hitting home.

“She has unknowingly revealed her opinion of me!” thought he. “And I dared to speak to her of love, with a past that truly exemplifies the picture she has just drawn.”

He was now, in truth, experiencing his first real feeling of remorse, as he thought of his careless, reckless life, his weaknesses, and secret sins.

“Yes,” he said, with an effort to hide his agitation, “most men will certainly have to answer for many sins in that respect, and women as well. But won’t you sing something for me before I go?”

asked he, as an excuse to get away from the gaze of her eyes.

Evelyn rose without a word and walked to the piano. For several minutes she stood with her eyes fixed on the wall beyond, in deep contemplation; then she selected a piece from several that lay at one end of the piano.

It was one that had been arranged expressly for her voice by the professor who had trained it. The words were those of Thomas B. Pollock.

The young man was leaning over a table on his elbows, absorbed in thought. His eyes had been opened suddenly to a new view of himself. At the moment he was almost entirely oblivious to his surroundings. But when Evelyn struck the first chord it aroused him; he raised his head and stared at the young girl at the piano, with eyes and ears alert. He could hear every word distinctly.

“We have not known Thee as we ought, nor learned
Thy wisdom, grace and power;
The things of earth have filled our thought,
And trifles of the passing hour.
Lord, give us light Thy truth to see,
And make us wise in knowing Thee.

“We have not feared Thee as we ought,
Nor bowed beneath Thine awful eye,
Nor guarded deed, and word, and thought,
Remembering that God was nigh.
Lord, give us grace to know Thee near,
And grant the grace of holy fear.

"We have not loved Thee as we ought,
 Nor cared that we are loved by Thee;
 Thy presence we have coldly sought,
 And feebly longed Thy face to see.
 Lord, give a pure and loving heart
 To feel and own the love Thou art.

"We have not served Thee as we ought;
 Alas! the duties left undone,
 The work with little fervor wrought,
 For Thee to toil, for Thee to fight!
 When shall we know Thee as we ought,
 And fear and love and serve aright!

"When shall we out of trial be brought,
 Be perfect in the land of light!
 Lord, may we day by day prepare
 To see Thy face, and serve Thee there."

Sweet and low came the strains at first; then the voice grew fuller and louder, with a pathos and fervor that seemed to make the very walls of the room vibrate, as well as the nerves of the listener. Never did Evelyn sing it so well, stirred as her heart was by the unusual experiences of the past week.

Scott was greatly affected. This new view of himself that had so suddenly loomed up, grew more pronounced with every word of that beautiful hymn. With every note, it grew more hideous; one after another his sins and past weaknesses rose before him; and then came the revelation, that no matter what reformation he might work in himself in the future, or how amicably he might succeed in making

a settlement with Marie, he could never be worthy of a union with Evelyn Drayton. Never before had his conscience been keen enough to see things in the light they now appeared.

The closing words melted away gradually in such exquisite sweetness that he was held spellbound; and when the voice ceased entirely there was a complete silence. Evelyn turned, and beheld him sitting with his face buried in his hands. She could see that he was breathing hard, and appeared to be unconscious of her presence.

She was completely nonplussed. Then a sudden hope took possession of her. Was it that the words had appealed to his conscience she had just sung? Oh, that they had! It might be the means of his keeping his promise to Marie and marry her honorably. It was very unusual to see a young man in this attitude, and particularly Alfred Scott, the gay care-free fellow, always jovial and light-hearted. Never had Evelyn seen him dull, or the least cast down in spirits.

After a brief silence she rose and stepped over to him. Still he did not look up.

"Did you like that hymn?" asked she.

The sound of her voice aroused him; the strained tension of his nerves relaxed somewhat, but the gloom remained. It had seized his soul in a vise-like grip, as he wrestled with this new awakening of himself, and the consequent damper it threw upon his most ardent hopes, blasting them forever.

He started as though suddenly awakened from

a deep stupor. He dropped his hands, and Evelyn saw that his eyes were glistening with tears. She could hardly believe he was the same person who had entered the house with her just an hour previous.

He even forgot to rise out of respect for Evelyn, who was still standing beside him.

"Miss Drayton," he began tremulously, "I came here this evening for the express purpose of telling you of my love. And when I found there was no response whatever in your own heart, I did not urge my suit. I silently hoped that in time I might win your love; but now I think differently. I know that even if I did succeed, our lives could never be linked together in matrimony. I have suddenly been brought face to face with that fact-to-night."

He hesitated, cleared his throat, then continued:

"You may not understand me exactly, but when I look back on my past life, and then at your own life, in contrast, my unworthiness stands out so glaringly hideous that I wonder now how I ever dared speak to you of love."

While he spoke, Evelyn's whole attitude toward him was undergoing a complete transformation. Since hearing Marie's story in the morning, she had developed a violent hatred for him, such as she had never experienced before toward a fellow-creature; even his good points had been swallowed up entirely in the overwhelming disgust it had created. But now her sympathy is awakened, and pity takes the place of scorn, and a heart-felt interest developed

in place of hatred. She saw him now as a brother who had erred, instead of the obnoxious creature which her promise only had prevented her from ignoring entirely. By some manner or means he had been reminded of his past in a very forcible manner. She felt quite confident of this, and to be awakened to a full realization of a wrong doing, she knew, was always the first stepping-stone to reformation.

"Yes," she thought, as Scott buried his face in his hands again—"what am I, that I should entertain such a feeling toward any fellow-creature? Of what avail would it be, for me to turn my back upon him? What do I know of his life, any more than I did of Marie's, and of the influences under which he has been reared?—and, as he says, of a man of the world, who is surrounded by temptations on every side?" With these thoughts she drew up a chair and seated herself beside him.

"Mr. Scott," she said earnestly, "we are all only human—the very best of us are daily breaking the law of God in thought, word, and deed. We are all weak creatures, but it is possible for us to grow better, if we will continually seek the higher guidance. Yes, it is even possible for us to make retribution for any sins committed, past or present."

Scott was visibly affected by her words and the feeling expressed in them. He lowered his hands again, and stared into space.

"You speak of your past as though you had committed some dreadful wrong," she continued, watching him closely.

"I have, Miss Drayton—I have!" he said, with a sad ring in his voice.

"Is it—is it one for which you could in any way make amends?" she ventured.

There was a pause. For the first time Scott turned his eyes full upon her, and he saw that her own were filled with tears.

"Oh, don't—don't, Miss Drayton! I am not worth those tears—this sympathy! I must be going—I am really not myself—" with a hoarse laugh, half rising as he spoke. But Evelyn laid a detaining hand on his arm.

"Will you not answer me just this one question before you go?" asked she. "Is that wrong anything that can be righted?"

The whole situation was a vital one now to Evelyn, in view of Marie's future and what this awakening may lead him to do.

"Yes, it could be to a certain extent," he finally answered, turning his face away again.

"Then right it at once, I beseech you, Mr. Scott! You will never regret it. No matter what may befall you in years to come, the very thought will bring you peace and satisfaction, that you had been heroic enough to make amends to the best of your ability for some past misdeed. And if it concerns another person," she ventured again, clearing her throat, "it is all the more urgent that you do not let the opportunity pass. I have found this to be true in my own experience. There are some things that can be rectified. Some things for which we can make

reparation, and to neglect doing so will make life a burden."

"I will think about what you say, Miss Drayton," said he huskily, moving slowly toward the door, followed by Evelyn.

"Perhaps some day we shall talk further about this, when I am in a better frame of mind," said he, turning as he took his hat from the rack. "Good-night—I shall never forget you. You don't know what you have done for me—but do not concern yourself about me—I am not—"

His throat filled up; he could not trust himself to speak another word. He turned quickly, and the next instant was out the door.

Evelyn stood on the porch and looked after him as he hurried down the pathway to the sidewalk, then up the street until he was lost in the shadow of the trees. She was aroused by Betsy's voice in the hall, and closing the door she joined the old servant and assisted her in locking the windows.

"'Fo' de Lawd, chile," she exclaimed, throwing Evelyn a curious glance, "I t'ought dat gen'l'man gwine t' stay t' mawnin', and dat's why I rattled dem shutters in de dinin' room—" giving a little chuckle—"jes' t' sort o' remind him ob de time. Did yo' heah me, honey?"

"No, I didn't notice it," answered Evelyn. "But, Betsy," and she turned toward her with a look of evident displeasure, "I would prefer that you did not use that means again—nor any other, for that matter—as a hint to my guests to depart. Some

may think it was done by an order from me, and would look upon it as an insult; besides, it may just happen that I might desire the person to remain longer, whom you so rudely try to frighten off."

"Lan' sakes, chile!—yo' depen' on me t' know when t' rattle an' when t' keep still. Doan' yo' suppose I knows dat it all depen's on de pusson? Recommember, chile, I's doan' mind stayin' up. I's doze in de cheer all de evenin' jes' as comfor'ble as in de bed, but t'night, I's jes' t'ought t' mese'f dat dis young gen'l'man ain't got no excuse fo' t' keep yo' up so late—unless, honey—" and Betsy drew down the corners of her mouth and gave a wink—"he expects t' marry yo'!"

"Don't talk such nonsense, Betsy! The quicker you can get the notion out of your head the better, that every gentleman who calls to see me wants to marry me."

"Well, yo' nurver can tell, Miss Ev'lyn—love is a disease dat is mighty treach'rous, an' yo' doan' know when it's 'bout t' brek out. Anybody is liability to it, an' it may brek out in yo' own heart furst, honey, an' den agin it might in de gen'l'man's."

Evelyn laughed.

"Well, whichever way it happens, I guess I'll be able to take care of myself, and I do not see that it is necessary to look so distressed about it," said she, as she walked toward the stairs.

Betsy hurried after her.

"Chile, chile!" said she, snatching at Evelyn's

skirt as she started up the steps. "Yo' doan' know anything mo' dan a l'il chile 'bout dis business. Yo' cyan' say what yo' gwine t' do, an' what yo' ain't gwine t' do. I knows dat if de disease ob lub tecks hol' ob yo' heart, it'll nurver rekiver, if yo're lover didn't correspond t' it. Yo'd al'ays be de same merry chile t' de worl', I expects, but de misery would eat yo're berry life an' soul out laik a cancer t' de end ob yo're days. So teck keer, honey, teck keer—dat's all. I's had 'sperience, an I's knows."

Evelyn laughed merrily, though her eyes glistened with tears. She turned on the steps, and leaning over, patted the old negro on the head, her face suffused in blushes.

"Betsy, you mustn't borrow trouble; and I tell you that I will not make myself miserable for any man. So now good-night. Go to bed in peace."

But Betsy shook her head gravely as Evelyn started up the stairs, mumbling to herself—

"Pore innocent chile! Yo' doan' know—yo' doan' know!"

CHAPTER XX.

During the few remaining weeks at Clover Hills, Evelyn had so much to do and to think about, that for the first time in her life she began to be conscious of the fact that she was not quite equal to the demands made upon her. On awakening in the mornings, a feeling of lassitude, which she seemed unable to shake off, pervaded her whole body. It was a physical weakness, entirely new to her—and it was not to be wondered at, with all her present duties. She had her daily household cares: an hour in the study with her father, copying at his dictation; calls to make on the church members, the sick to visit, cases of charity to look into, besides assisting in entertaining the daily callers at the house.

The clergyman was still quite weak, and able to make only an occasional visit among his parishioners; consequently Evelyn and her mother were obliged to take his place, in this respect, as well as they could.

Mrs. Drayton had never been able to assist her husband to any great extent with the church work. With the care of five children, and the assistance of only one maid, the home duties alone had kept her pretty well tied down. She was a model house-keeper and home-maker, practical, ambitious, and possessing talents that would have made her a leader in any organization or club, had she been

inclined to so interest herself. She had positively refused to avail herself of the many opportunities that had been offered her in this respect. Her home duties she considered her first, and most important. Outside work and interests, she averred, were for those with whom it was not possible to neglect any nearer duties. This had invariably been her answer when her opinion was asked on this subject. And also that in no line of outside work did there reach out so many avenues for usefulness, and accomplishing real good, as in those which reached out from the home.

With her, the home was in truth the foundation of civilization, and to neglect even one duty for an outside charity was never looked upon by her with any credit. This did not necessarily imply that she looked upon woman merely as a household drudge, or an animated carpet-sweeper. On the other hand, she contended that it was to prevent her from being such, that she perfected herself in all things pertaining to the management of a home, so that it would become a pleasure instead of a labor, and enable her, through this knowledge, and intelligent management, to find time for improving her mind, and keeping abreast with the principal affairs of the day; and even, perhaps, to take an active interest in some outside cause without neglecting the smallest of home duties. Evelyn had inherited her mother's temperament to a pronounced degree, and, as young as she was, displayed the same talent in taking hold of a thing and pushing it through.

She had been offered several positions by organizations that had recognized her talent, but she refused them, because she saw very plainly where her duty lay. Since the evening she had given her little talk to the congregation she had received two urgent offers. One, to be the head of a Social Settlement Quarter in one of the large cities, and the other, to be secretary of a branch of the Christian Association. She would have accepted one of these, had her plan for the following winter fallen through, which, at any rate, she considered the best, as it enabled her to be at home, and at the same time to be of some assistance to her mother.

Together with all the extra demands and cares at present, they had two more members added to the household for two weeks. Mrs. Bentley had been ill ever since the cruel treatment of her husband that afternoon, with a physician in attendance. She was unable to look after the two younger children, so Evelyn took them home one day, thinking it would be less trouble than looking after them in their own home. The Draytons had succeeded in obtaining a worthy woman to look after Mrs. Bentley, their house, and little Harold, although even then it was necessary for either Evelyn or her mother to make daily visits to the house.

At first, the revelation of her love for Whitfield had given Evelyn a peculiar joy and happiness, but it was followed by a feeling of unrest, and a longing for his presence. All sorts of doubts and fears began to develop, especially when she noticed in one

of the papers that Adele Kingsley and Whitfield had left for London on the same steamer.

She tried to console herself with the thought that it was an accident; still, there always remained the doubt. She had never seen anything marked in his attentions to Adele; in fact, it appeared to her that he was most indifferent, with no inclination even to speak of her. Although there were many things she could not account for, she felt convinced that there was a mystery connected with the two, that perhaps gave Adele some cause for her peculiar actions.

Marie left Clover Hills a few days after Adele. During that period Evelyn managed to see her several times, and did much in the way of encouraging her, and brightening her spirits, winning a promise from her to write regularly.

In case she should in some way hear of Scott's accompanying her home on that Sunday evening, Evelyn told her of it, but not, of course, of the principal object of his visit.

"Take my advice, and try indifference," laughed she in parting. "Do not let him see that you are pining for him; The best thing you can do at present, I think, is to ignore him entirely."

Marie smiled through her tears.

"I had already determined to follow that course," said she. "But I am afraid it is over with us forever."

It was, after all, these new and most unexpected experiences that were affecting Evelyn, more than the extra demands that were being made upon her

physically. She was looking daily now for the letter from Whitfield that had been promised, and was in hopes of its containing some explanation of the incident of the two sailing on the same vessel; but things became only more complicated when one morning, in place of the letter she was looking for, from London, she received one from Adele Kingsley. It was written in a lively strain, describing the gay time she was having, in striking contrast with the manner in which she passed the time at Clover Hills. She apologized for her abrupt leave-taking, attributing it to various things.

"I hear that John Burney, the young minister, is very attentive to you," the letter ran on, "and I am indeed glad to hear it. You would make an ideal wife for a minister. Do keep me posted on all that is going on in Clover Hills. I am very much interested in the place and the people, especially in you, Miss Drayton, who, I am sorry to say, I did not at first quite understand; there being some things, of which you have no doubt heard by this time through Miss Anderson, that I did not consider altogether consistent for one of your Christian standing. However, I think differently now, and I desire to apologize to you for my actions, which at times may have puzzled you. I am anxious to count you among my permanent friends, and hope that you will let me hear from you very soon."

"The plot thickens," thought Evelyn, as she folded the letter, smiling in spite of it all. "How strange it seems that anyone should be jealous of me. I

believe I am beginning to be jealous of her—and I never imagined that I could possibly be capable of anything so foolish, especially when the gentleman in question doesn't care a fig for me, and never will. I must keep my thoughts from dwelling upon him; I did not realize at first what a fight it was going to be."

Try as she would, she could not stifle the love that in spite of everything was growing stronger day by day, hopeless as she felt it was.

A few days after receiving Adele's letter, the long-looked-for one finally arrived.

Evelyn had always prided herself on her strong nerves, but her hand shook noticeably when this letter was given her, and her heart thumped hard against her chest.

Hurriedly she made for her room, and locked the door, that she might not be disturbed. It ran

"MY DEAR MISS DRAYTON: Since my arrival in London, it seems that no opportunity has presented itself to write, until this evening. I have met a number of friends and acquaintances here—several of them very unexpectedly—and they have monopolized me entirely. I had expected to find the season practically over, but the Americans stationed here appear to be having many visitors, which makes it gayer than usual for this time of the year. So instead of a quiet restful time, which the doctor prescribed for me, I find myself in the midst of a social whirl, from which I have so far found it impossible to extricate myself.

"However, I have not forgotten you, nor my promise; neither have I forgotten the good resolutions I made in Clover Hills. In fact, I have frequently found myself contemplating them, as I also have the various subjects we discussed together.

"Now don't you think I have made a good beginning? Sometimes, in the very midst of some social function, I find myself standing in the gay throng, absorbed in thought. Since I came to London I am every day being more and more convinced that the people are the happiest in this world who consider this life one of preparation for a higher sphere. It is a sad sight to see the young lives thrown away in a constant seeking after pleasure; and yet, after all, it is generally the abuse of, and not the pleasures themselves, that do the harm and demoralize society. This error I see everywhere; and so evident is it here that I have asked myself the question repeatedly—"what is society doing for the uplifting of men and women?" And often, as I look about me, I wonder how many realize the nearness of eternity. How many, in fact, make any attempt to prepare for the life beyond. If there are any who think at all of these things, there are very few indeed, with whom it is of sufficient importance to act those thoughts out in their lives. It appears to me most of the young women in London society have no other aim than to enjoy themselves, to be admired, and seek titled or wealthy husbands. Beautiful and fascinating, many of them; a few accomplished and clever, but soulless.

"Isn't it a fight, when one starts to 'go on unto perfection?' I can see you smiling at that; but really I am in earnest. I never realized what a battle it was going to be, to stop and listen to one's conscience. I must confess, though, that the time seems very far off indeed when I may reach the state of perfection as to feel that it is absolutely right for you to expend your talents and energies in ministering to those who are so far beneath you. Do make some effort to guard your health before there is a sudden break-down!

"But to go back: I am going to speak now very plainly and earnestly, because I long for your advice. You have pointed out the way, and I seem to stand now face to face with the question, shall I accept Him or not? Whether it is the want of faith or the influence of carnal things, I know not, but I stand like one wavering, uncertain. At times my soul appears

torpid; then again it is aroused to an unusual activity, and I am conscious of a peculiar fear, and a warning from I know not where. Then it is I take refuge in plunging into social pleasures with renewed energy, as though trying to escape from a too alert conscience.

"To obtain faith such as yours seems far beyond my reach; and yet it is growing more and more evident to my mind every day that man reaches his highest spiritual attainment in this world only when his Maker reigns supreme in his heart. I am still like a little child groping in the dark, beating the air to ward off dangers that I cannot see, but which I know surround me, while I continue to stumble on.

"How I wish that I could speak words of equal power to help you, as you have me; but regarding spiritual things, my very ignorance prevents me from giving any help or advice. I imagine, however, that you stand in a position now, where human assistance is of no avail.

"I have been reading a little book on The Immortality of the Soul, which has given me much food for thought. I do not remember that we ever discussed this particular subject. Dare I hope that amidst all your cares you will find time to write me your views concerning it? Of course there is no man living who can tell for a certainty just what the immortality of the soul signifies. Will it be eventually separated from the body? In reference to this, I read the other day that William Osler, in his recent lecture at Harvard, said, that the scientific student should be ready to acknowledge the value of a belief in a hereafter, as an asset in human life, for, in the presence of so many mysteries which have been unveiled, he cannot deny the possibility of a future state.

"I hope your father continues to improve, and that I will soon hear a good report of him. I will be looking forward with great pleasure to your answer to this letter.

"With kind remembrances to all,

"Your sincere friend,

"FRANK WHITFIELD."

At least a half dozen times in succession Evelyn read over this letter, and it was with a mixture of pleasure and pain. She was pleased, because it indicated a continued interest in his spiritual welfare, and that he had in truth taken the first step toward soul-growth.

But what of Adele Kingsley, about whom she had hoped to learn something in this letter? Ah, there was the sting! The very fact of his not mentioning her name served as fresh fuel to the already smouldering embers of jealousy, and made the mystery still more complicated. It was the first time in her life that she had ever felt the sickness of jealousy.

She answered this letter in a few days, as follows:

"MY DEAR MR. WHITFIELD: Your letter reached me on Tuesday last, and was most welcomely received. You appear to be having rather a gay time, from all accounts, which leads me to think that your kind solicitations on my behalf are misplaced. Would it not be more advisable for me to warn you? Having been under the doctor's care, and ordered by him to lead a quiet life, free from all excitement, while I have no use for a physician whatever, and am enjoying the best of health, with the exception of feeling a little tired at times.

"I have not been at the hotel since Miss Anderson's departure three weeks ago, and have taken very little part in the social affairs of the town, though Clover Hills never was so gay as this summer, having an unusually large number of summer guests.

"Perhaps you will be interested to know that the Reverend John Burney has accepted the call. The people are very enthusiastic about him. He appears to be an excep-

tionally talented young man, and has a wonderful mind for one of his years. I do so enjoy hearing him talk, and as much out of the pulpit as in it.

"To learn that you have begun to fight is a very good sign, it indicates that your conscience is growing keener. Of course, it means a continuous fight with any one who starts out with the purpose of perfecting himself, how could it be anything else, when in thought, word, and deed we are all daily sinning? But what can one achieve in any undertaking, without an effort, without a struggle? And after all, however, we may look at it, '*La vie est un combat, pas un hymne.*' You tell me that you are wavering, uncertain, and plunge into festivities as a means of getting away from a too alert conscience. But I see that you still feel uncomfortable. Can you not see very plainly that the two forces of which we spoke are each striving for supremacy? Can you not see that you waver because the love of the world and material things still dominates, and is ever trying to force out the influence of the spirit?

"We are born of the spirit, and consequently it is by the spirit alone we must be rescued. On account of our materialistic blindness it is so difficult for us to understand, to open our hearts to its influence, and bring ourselves into subjection to it.

"That there is a yearning down in your heart for something you do not possess, indicates that you have taken the first step toward renouncing yourself to the will of God.

"There is just one remedy for your present condition, Mr. Whitfield, and that is to stop and listen to your conscience as you should, instead of endeavoring to lull it, and get away from it; and renounce self, for self can never be trusted. The Spirit only can guide and control, and to live under its power is the only means of the Christian's possible success. It is an excellent thing to be a highly moral man, as I feel that you have always been, but what will morality do for our eternal good, without the deeper foundation of religion.

"In regard to immortality, my opinion on such a great and mysterious question, I almost hesitate to express. I do believe, however, that there is a greater and higher life beyond the grave. I am still orthodox enough to believe in two resurrections, that of the just and of the unjust, the just to eternal life, the unjust to eternal death, death meaning separation from God. In Mr. Schofield's article in reference to the two resurrections, he shows from Scripture that they occur at two different times, but that these resurrections concern only the bodies of the dead. Their disembodied spirits being instantly in conscious bliss or woe.

"To secure the soul's immortality, the higher life, the spiritual must be built up. I too, have recently been reading a book on this subject, by McConnell. He says that the hope of immortality is but the instinct of self-protection carried to its highest term, a moral achievement possible where goodness is, impossible where it is not.

"In regard to the resurrection of the body, this same writer also says, that people for ages before Christ had a notion of some kind of nebulous and phantasmal survival of the spirit.

"A spirit with no material organ for expressing itself puts to confusion all our ideas as to what a human being is, and the body is just as essential a component part of our idea of a man as the soul is, and also is it as easy to think of the body's becoming immortal without a soul, as to think of the spirit becoming immortal without a body. To prove this, he refers to the risen Christ as a living man like other men and yet strangely unlike them. He is independent of the laws of matter, and at the same time he conforms to some of them. He was seen, and at first not recognized, and the question arises, 'Does the flesh, through the influence of the spirit lose all that is material, and one of another fabric take its place? A body that cannot be destroyed, that is capable of moving freely without any hindrance; a body that is obedient to the laws of a new life—the life of the celestial body?'

"The first step is taken toward immortality,' says McConnell, 'when the individual reaches the point to know good and evil. But we need not worry because we cannot see these things clearly, nor because we do not know just exactly what the harbor is to which the word of God is guiding us. We do know that it is one of safety, and that is all that is necessary for any of us to know.' Do you remember that Bulwer said: 'Never had science so sublime a triumph as the conviction that immortality will be gained. Never had ambition so lofty an end as the search after immortality.'

"The country is beautiful at the present time. I never saw the grass so green, the trees so verdant and fresh, and the roses so gorgeous and plentiful. I have a constant longing to stroll out in the open country beyond the town, and seek some quiet secluded spot along the creek, just for a little respite it would be a great treat nowadays, but I am afraid no opportunity will present itself before we leave Clover Hills, so completely is my time taken up. I did, however, manage to play in a tennis tournament. It was very much against my will, especially as I have had so little practice this year, but, they would not take no for an answer, and so I consented. I played wretchedly as I predicted and lost; however, some one else had the joy of winning, and the exercise was a good thing for me.

"I thank you very much for your kind inquiries after my father, who has improved, though he appears quite weak. The pulpit has been occupied so frequently with candidates, that the relief has been most beneficial? The improvement in this short time convinces us of a permanent cure being accomplished by a long rest.

"With hopes of hearing from you soon again,

"Your sincere friend,

"EVELYN DRAYTON,"

CHAPTER XXI.

A garden fête, given by Lady Marchmont at her villa near London, in aid of a London charity, was the first event in a social way, that greeted Whitfield on his arrival in that city.

Lady Marchmont was an American by birth, but had spent nearly her whole life in England, marrying an English nobleman of prominence, who died a few years after their marriage. Her wealth, culture and personal attractions, together with her aristocratic marriage, gave her an *entrée* attained by few Americans. She was a distant relative of Adele Kingsley, and had done much for her in a social way.

She was noted for her charities, and the large amount of money she raised for this purpose. She was quick to grasp an opportunity that presented itself just at this time, to raise, perhaps, a very large sum for a particular charity she had in mind for some time, and spared no pains to make it a success.

Among her own visitors that year, and those visiting friends, there existed considerable talent in the way of amateur singers and actors; and she conceived the idea of having a garden fête, preceded by a little open-air operetta. Although rather late in the season, there was still a sufficient number of people remaining in the city and suburbs to warrant her giving the affair.

Whitfield soon learned that the principal attraction of the fête was centered in a beautiful young American, a Miss Alexander, who was to take the leading part in the operetta. She had created quite a furore since the opening of the season; had been presented at court by His Majesty's express desire, through the influence of the American Ambassador, who was a near relative of hers.

She was tall, graceful, and with a certain majesty in her bearing that seemed to command homage. Her hair was dark, and her skin of a dazzling whiteness. Having no money, she could not depend on that as an attraction, but the charm of her personality, her beauty and wit, more than compensated for what she lacked in that respect, and had drawn around her even the most exclusives, which caused considerable envy and jealousy among many who had for years failed in their efforts to gain this notice.

At the first meeting, Whitfield was conscious of the influence of her personality and fascinating manners; and so frequently was he thrown with her, that even before the garden fête took place, rumors began to circulate of a probable match between the two.

Adele, who moved in the same circle, saw what seemed to her a mutual infatuation, and her jealousy now turned in another direction, which accounted for the change in her feelings toward Evelyn, and a desire to make amends for the wrong she had done her, ending finally in writing to her, and making an attempt to excuse her childish actions.

When Whitfield saw her on the steamer, he was more than surprised. He succeeded, however, in hiding it from her, and treated her with the utmost indifference. How long he could have kept this up he never could have told, but, fortunately for him, Adele was taken violently seasick the second day out, and was obliged to keep in her stateroom during the remainder of the trip.

In regard to his feelings toward her, she was again totally in the dark. But the very uncertainty kept up her courage, and buoyed her with fresh hopes, and the desire to continue her efforts to win him.

Miss Alexander's principal aim in life, at present, was to secure a husband who was wealthy and of high social standing. And in Whitfield she saw the one who would meet every requirement of her ambition.

As a rule, Whitfield was one who rarely indulged in idle talk and foolish flatteries with women; in fact, he was not a typical society man. His wealth and family connections gave him the entrée to the most exclusive circles; and, as he had often remarked himself, it was owing to the force of circumstances more than natural inclinations, that he was seen so much in the social world. Since his arrival in London he was not like himself, as he plunged into social life with a gusto that made Adele open her eyes in wonder. She even noticed that his actions when with her were not the same. He appeared suddenly to acquire the faculty of acting to suit the

caprice of any woman with whom he was talking; and especially with Miss Alexander was this noticeable to Adele, for he seemed to be paying her continual homage, and conjuring up all sorts of pretty speeches. But Adele did not know that he took special pains when she was present in showing his devotion to Miss Alexander.

On the evening of the fête, Whitfield was one of the first to arrive, and for some time afterwards a line of carriages rolled under the porte-cochère, depositing their fair burdens and escorts. It was a very notable gathering. Some of the guests remained in the city longer than they intended for the sole purpose of attending the fête, which they knew would be worth waiting for, if Lady Marchmont had anything to do with it.

It was not long before every seat was taken in the improvised opera house, the walls of which consisted of trees, shrubbery, plants, and sweet-smelling flowers, and the ceiling the star-lit heavens. Just a few rows back of Whitfield sat Adele, with a young Englishman who appeared to be very attentive; but so taken up was she in watching Whitfield, that it was an effort for her to give much attention to her companion.

Society was becoming wearisome to her nowadays. Everything was a bore, without the stimulating influence of Whitfield's presence, whose image was constantly in her mind. Her absorbing passion appeared only to be increased by fears, fed by doubts, and kept alive by the hope that had never

yet entirely died out. For months she had, in truth, been fast developing a condition of nervousness that had by this time become chronic showing itself in a marked restlessness and excitability, with occasional outbreaks of hysteria. Her mind failed to settle itself on any other line of thought, and she was contracting the habit of resorting regularly to opiates.

The little operetta was performed admirably. As an actress and singer, Miss Alexander was a great success, and the leading star of the performance.

Seemingly, Whitfield appeared to sit like one entranced throughout the entire performance, arousing himself only when the time came for applause. His actions kept Adele's heart in a continual flutter. She had eyes only for him and her new rival. And they flashed angry darts first at one, then the other, when she thought she detected some signs of recognition between them. It reminded her of that Sunday evening when she watched Whitfield and Evelyn in the church.

After the play the people roamed throughout the beautiful grounds, which were lighted up with numerous lanterns. In the meantime, the seats were removed from the low platform, which was now to serve as a dancing floor.

When Miss Alexander made her appearance after the play, she was surrounded instantly, and congratulations showered upon her from all sides. She never appeared to such an advantage as she did that night. She was apparently very modest in her

acknowledgments of the flattering speeches, with a certain culture and grace in all that she did and said.

Adele also, that night, shone to an unusual advantage, Miss Alexander's presence alone preventing her from being the belle of the evening. She was more like her former self, before this jealous fever had seized her, and, as Whitfield declared to himself, more irresistible than ever.

She had discovered that posing as an invalid didn't pay. The entire Clover Hills episode, she felt, was a complete failure in so far as making any headway with Whitfield was concerned. She had taken particular pains in dressing for this occasion, and, after the play, aroused her energies to make herself as attractive as possible. She determined at any rate not to be totally eclipsed by this fashionable beauty and belle of London's past season. She had a faculty for adapting herself to people when she desired to use it, and appeared to be equally at home in conversing with the lawyer, writer, and the business man, as well as the ultra-fashionable man of the world.

She was capable of making a good pretense when discussing matters with which she was not familiar, so that she was given more credit for her knowledge of things than she really deserved.

All this, with her striking beauty and exquisite taste in dressing, drew, of course, many men toward her, like so many moths to the light, which she was particularly anxious to have Whitfield notice.

There were many young women besides Adele who were hoping for some attention from Whitfield; many who were anxiously seeking an introduction, envying with Adele the lavish attentions he was bestowing on Miss Alexander. Remarkably handsome and distinguished he looked, with all his paleness. Judging by his animated manner that night, a stranger might easily have taken him for a gay fellow of the world, but his friends knew that he was naturally grave. He was a thinker, and rarely is it that a thinker is very much in evidence in the fashionable world.

For the first dance he had succeeded in securing Miss Alexander, and when he sought Adele, to place his name upon her programme, he found the first half filled, with the exception of the last dance, alongside of which he wrote his name. While talking with her, there stole over his senses again that peculiar influence, accompanied as usual by the counter-feeling.

When he joined her again, later on, for the dance, he found her in the gayest of humors, but she ceased talking as they stepped upon the platform. Back and forth from one end to the other they gracefully glided, each seemingly too engrossed in the pleasure of the dance to talk.

Now and then Adele glanced up, and smiled in a bewitching way through eyes that appeared to hold him, as they had heretofore, with a strange fascination.

"Oh, if I could only understand his actions, and

read his motives, I know I could win him!" thought she.

A tiny ringlet of her dark hair freed itself from the diamond-studded band that encircled her head, and kept trembling bewitchingly against Whitfield's cheek with every motion of her body. Her gown was white, of a sheeny gauze material that shimmered in waves of silver at every motion. The bodice was cut low, and sleeveless, held together over the shoulders by diamond-studded armlets.

When the music ceased, they walked through the grounds in search of a resting-place, and finally succeeded in finding an empty bench near some trees, just a short distance beyond the lights.

CHAPTER XXII.

"That was doing well for a nervous semi-invalid," laughed Whitfield, "or, I should say, for two. And you don't appear to be in the least fagged."

"One can't always judge by appearances," said Adele. "I am just as weak and nervous—if not more so, than I was at Clover Hills"—thinking it advisable to be very cautious in handling this matter. "As I told you, I found it was of no benefit to me to make a recluse of myself. Dr. Fulton, I think, made a mistake in prescribing a rest-cure for me. It only intensified things, and made me almost melancholy. I have taken matters in my own hands now, and will give my own prescription a trial. It is to enjoy myself—but in moderation, of course."

"I have been of the opinion all along that with your active temperament it would prove to be an unbearable penance to give up your social life entirely," said Whitfield, a glimmer of amusement lurking in his eyes, lifting from Adele's arm, as he spoke, a beautiful scarf of web-like texture, and placing it around her shoulders, whence it had fallen. This little act of thoughtfulness made Adele's heart thump hard.

"Thank you," said she. "So you do care enough about me not to want to see me take cold?"

"It certainly would be unpardonable on my part

to see any lady run such a risk who was as overheated as you are, and make no effort to protect her," returned he.

Adele looked up and gave a prolonged "Oh!"—then fell into a sudden silence. "He seems to take a variety of moods this evening," thought she. "At one time he flatters, and is so very polite and gracious; then another he will take pains to intimate that his actions did not imply the least personal kindness or consideration."

"Do you know, Frank," she began, after a pause, "I really don't deserve to have anyone thoughtful of me or my welfare. I am a terribly selfish creature; it has been only recently that this fact has dawned upon me. All my life I have been waited upon, receiving, but never giving—the very height of self-love."

Whitfield turned sharply toward her, surprised, perplexed, and passed his hand across his forehead as though searching for a mental illumination. She had spoken before in this vein, and he wondered if, after all, he had misjudged her, and that there might be more sincerity, more real good in this young woman's make-up, than he had ever given her credit for.

"It does seem strange," said he, "that with all our faults we rarely see them, and still more rarely acknowledge them. But it has been said that when one does do this, it is the first step toward reform. And yet"—watching her closely—"so far as receiving and giving is concerned, there are some people

who seem to be born to be served and considered, born to receive homage, and to be—loved.”

Adele gave a little start; there was something in his voice that gave her strong hope.

“I am right,” thought she; “to appeal to him, one must be capable of noble, beautiful, and elevated thoughts. I will show him now that I am, and that I can take as serious a view of life as anyone—“Yes, Frank,” said she, “that may be, but you cannot count me in that category,” toying nervously with her fan. “I see no evidence whatever of being loved, and I do so crave love!”

Whitfield kept his eyes steadily upon her. She suddenly clasped her hands, and gazed wistfully toward the enchanting garden scene. The gay assembly was scattered over the spacious grounds, in the midst of playing fountains, trees, flowers, and magnificent plants. The lights of many lanterns poured a soft light on the jeweled necks and white shoulders of the beautiful women, gowned in a variety of delicate colors mingled with white, and the more somber clothing of the men. Now and then a high official of the Army or Navy would appear, in all the splendor of his full-dress uniform.

“You may be surprised to hear me talk in this way,” she began again, with a little quiver in her voice, when no response came from Whitfield. “But I am seeing things differently of late, and becoming more and more disgusted with myself every day, when I think of my useless life; and I am beginning to realize that it is of no credit to me to be always

served. I have never before been so seized with the desire to be something better than I am. To do something with my life.

"I wonder if she can be sincere!" thought Whitfield. "If so, I am just beginning to get acquainted with her better-self." "I have also come into that condition myself, of late," said he.

"Strange that we both should have become agitated at the same time in regard to these things," Adele murmured musingly, her hopes rising fast in the great success she was evidently making. "Oh, if I had only tried this scheme long ago," she thought, "I might have won him before this. I have failed perhaps because he thinks I am self-centered, and lacking in principles that he considers essential for the woman to possess who bears his name."

Just then refreshments were served, and taken to the guests as they sat on benches scattered through the grounds. A small table was placed before Whitfield and Adele, with wines and dainty dishes of various sorts; but it did not interrupt their conversation, which still continued along the same lines.

In the excess of her joy, Adele's faculties became sharpened, and every charm brought into play, to make the best of this opportunity. They were not near enough to any one to have their privacy intruded upon. They could plainly see all that was going on in the foreground, and hear the music quite distinctly. In the excitement of the moment Adele's nerves began to run riot. Her heart beat rapidly, and her eyes shone with an unusual bril-

liancy which was discernible to Whitfield, even in the semi-darkness.

"Isn't human nature a complex thing? Now imagine our conversation taking such a trend at a time like this," said Adele, taking a diamond-shaped chicken sandwich from the plate that Whitfield held toward her. "It's almost weird, isn't it?" with a gay ripple of laughter, assuming now a lighter vein. "If I were at all superstitious, Frank, I might look upon it all as an ill omen, so out of keeping is it with the scene before us."

Whitfield smiled.

"What a number of attractive and beautiful young women are here this evening," said she.

"Yes, I never saw so many at one time. One would hardly know which to choose—and so many with brains, too; it is really a delight to converse with them; which accounts for my dancing so little during the first half; several, I found, preferred to sit quietly and talk."

"And among this galaxy of beauty and wit is there not one to whom you would be likely to lose your heart?—not one whom you think you could love?" asked she, dropping her hands to the table, and turning her face toward him.

"Well, I don't know," returned he, demurely, looking off into space.

Adele winced. "You are certainly hard to please, Frank Whitfield, if your heart still continues to remain untouched with all the opportunities you have had," she said, disappointed with his answer.

"As I have said before, I am not particularly susceptible," pulling up the scarf again, that Adele had purposely manœuvred to let slide from her shoulders. His hand lingered in its meshes for a few seconds, against her neck, as though held there by a magnet, but another influence of apparently still greater force succeeded in drawing it away.

The tender, lingering touches did not escape Adele's notice; she was keenly alert to every glance, every act and mannerism, to detect the least encouragement. Her cheeks flushed, and she leaned a little closer to him, as the hand slowly drew itself away.

"Would you like to dance?" he asked, after the table was carried away, and the orchestra started on the second half of dances. "I believe you have this one disengaged?"

"If it is just the same to you, I prefer remaining here," replied she. "I know you don't care particularly for dancing."

"Very well," answered he, absently, settling back against the garden seat, as though resigning himself to the inevitable. He realized that he was still treading on dangerous ground even though he was conscious that the infatuation was losing its hold upon him more and more each day.

"Let me see—what were we talking about?" Adele queried, with another effort to lure him on, pressing two fingers between her eyes. "Oh, yes—about your being so slow to fall in love; and before that—let me see—I have it!—about selfish lives—

those who do nothing in the world for any one but themselves. Do you remember that little sermon of Miss Drayton's? Parts of it have stayed with me ever since. I have been thinking a great deal about it. It never occurred to me before how carnal pleasures attract and hold us, even though we know they are leading to our ultimate ruin, body and soul. Neither did it ever occur to me that it is possible for the very worst sinner 'to go on unto perfection,' if he so desires. But I see now, Frank, how hollow, how useless, my life has been! Had I only realized all this before, and had something to show for all the past wasted years," she choked, her whole body quivering, apparently with a heart-felt anguish at the sudden awakening to a realization of a worthless, aimless life.

She turned her body around as much as possible, and faced him squarely, laying her trembling hand on his arm, as it lay stretched out across the back of the seat.

"I admit, Frank," she went on, after a brief silence, in a voice full of pathos, "that carnal pleasures have held me in their grip for some years—and they have all been wasted years, I see now quite plainly. And yet—I have tried frequently to turn my mind to more serious and better things; but so far, with little success. I would no sooner start in to carry out my new resolutions, than I would find myself in the same old rut, doing the same old things, and in exactly the same old way. Why is it that I so repeatedly fail? Can you tell me?" she

asked, in a voice broken with sobs; and she gazed up into his face with her eyes full of tears.

But he did not answer. He was cogitating. He did not even look into the face upheld to his, though he felt the gaze of her eyes upon him, and was conscious of her deep agitation.

"Can it be possible that I have misunderstood her?" thought he, affected by her deep emotion, which he now could not believe was feigned. He could feel her jeweled fingers trembling against his arm. Never before did he see her in this light. Never before did he feel so much respect for her.

The scarf fell down again, but this time he did not replace it. He appeared not to have seen it fall, as he gazed thoughtfully into space with a great knot between his brows. He was conscious of a sudden dull throbbing in his head, as he asked himself this question: "Even with the discovery that she has a soul, could I love her as I should?"

The answer was long in coming, as also was the one for which the woman by his side was waiting; and while they sat silent, the tolling of a distant bell aroused him. His eyes swept over the brilliant garden scene toward the darkness beyond, whence came the tolling; and there rose a face so life-like that it printed itself forever on his memory. The eyes were turned toward him beseechingly, imploringly. For a moment he became completely absorbed, and watched the phantom as though his eyes were glued upon it. He began to question whether his tired body and weak nerves were mak-

ing him a victim of delusions, when the phantom gradually faded in the dark shadows. But the bell still tolled on; there was something in it that held him. It reminded him of the quaint little church at Clover Hills and the sermon Evelyn Drayton had preached, which had affected him as no other ever had, though he had heard many gifted divines both in his own country and abroad, but no sermon had ever so awakened his conscience as that short simple one had done; and there was something in the very thought of Evelyn Drayton that was always an inspiration. She had been the great incentive that stimulated him to higher and nobler thoughts, of which he had never before been capable.

Adele misconstrued his silence. She felt that the supreme moment had come. She saw that he was breathing hard, and could feel his arm quivering under her hand. She still trembled with suppressed excitement, and waited for the words she had longed for months to hear.

"He's afraid to speak," she thought, "for fear we might be seen or heard. There were some people strolling just back of us a minute ago."

She leaned still closer to him.

"What is it, Frank, that absorbs you to such an extent that you even ignore my questions?" she asked, bringing her upturned face so near to his that he could see the glistening tears in her eyes, as he glanced toward her, just for an instant. "Has my little confession so affected you that you cannot speak?" and she moved her hand along his arm to

his shoulder, then slowly up against his neck, with a tender pressure.

"Yes, I am unspeakably affected—astounded!" he returned, almost fiercely, springing away from the dazzling enchantress, to the corner of the seat. So sudden was it all, so great the revulsion of feeling, with which he was now seized, that he sat speechless after those few words.

Adele was stunned. It was as though she had been suddenly crushed with some great blow. His words wounded her like sword thrusts. But suddenly she straightened up defiantly, and sat watching him, wild-eyed and panting, like some enraged animal at bay.

That other influence had already begun the battle for supremacy, and was fast bringing Whitfield under its control, when this last act of Adele's broke the last remnant of that long-standing infatuation. There and then it received its death-blow. It instantly opened his eyes to the true situation. She had really succeeded in fooling him. But her gross familiarity seemed to him to be such a contradiction to all that she had been saying, that he knew now that it was all done for a purpose, a new rôle resorted to in her endeavors to entrap him, and he now experienced a great revulsion of feeling toward the woman at his side, which he was convinced could never be obliterated. She was, after all, what he had always thought her, insincere, and a hypocrite, more base even than he had ever imagined her.

A group of young people approaching brought them to their senses. It was an indescribable relief to Whitfield.

"Why, here you are!" they cried. "We have been assisting Mr. Townsend in his hunt for you, Miss Kingsley," one remarked.

"I actually thought you had deserted me, and taken your leave of us altogether, or perhaps forgotten to whom you had given this dance," said that gentleman, bowing courteously.

"No indeed! I am not guilty of any of your accusations," spoke up Adele, in a voice that was unduly excitable. But her dignity, flying to the rescue, she quickly regained some composure. "I have been waiting for you, and did not think you would have any trouble in finding me here," she said more composedly, fanning her flushed face with great vigor.

"Will you excuse me, Mr. Whitfield?" said she, with a haughty nod, as she moved off with her partner.

Whitfield bowed, but said nothing.

Ten minutes later, he was on his way to London. The garden fête held no further attractions for him—even the presence of the fascinating Miss Alexander was not sufficient inducement for him to remain longer. He had but one desire—to be alone with his thoughts.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was two o'clock when Whitfield arrived at the hotel, but it was far from his thoughts to retire. He seated himself in the dimly-lighted bedroom, and gave himself up to thought. It has been said that "the master-force of nature is a man in thought."

His mind was in a state of chaos. The climax had come to a combination of conflicts that had been for weeks tossing him on the turbulent sea of discontent, and the time was at hand when he must face this complex situation squarely. One conflict, at least, was ended, he was quite sure of that; and his soul rejoiced over his victory.

"Yes, there is no doubt about it now," he declared over and over again to himself. "The infatuation for that woman has received its death-blow. My spirit always did recoil from her; and how she could have appealed so strongly to my senses under the circumstances, is a mystery. What a weak creature is man, after all! How little it takes sometimes to cause him to succumb to the base passions of his lower self! And what a power woman wields over him! It is true that she shapes the destinies of man. I shudder now, when I think of what I escaped: a woman who has only physical attractions—in fact, a woman without a soul. And when I think of Evelyn Drayton in comparison—oh, God, that there were more women such as she!"

He buried his face in his hands, and began to picture her in all the beautiful phases of her character. The thought of her had become a memory almost sacred. He recalled how her face rose before him as an inspiration and warning, during all his interviews with Adele. And he wondered if he would have succeeded in coming out victorious, without that influence always holding him back like a check-rein. He remembered well how, at his own request, she had told him her simple views, and made an effort to teach him the right way to live from the Christian's standpoint. All this, and many other things, he recalled concerning her; when suddenly he found himself battling with that other conflict, that had been raging within him ever since his conscience was awakened, on that Sunday evening in Clover Hills.

He had intended to guide his life by that Scriptural lesson, and even made many new resolutions. He was even beginning to see life in a new light. And yet it had not brought him happiness. Neither did he receive that peace of which Evelyn Drayton had spoken; there was something still wanting, something he had not yet discovered. The world did not hold all that he craved, and still he was unable to fill the vacancy. He felt himself in the grasp of some power from which it seemed impossible to extricate himself; and the time had come now when he was determined to solve this problem, to know his exact relation to its power. It was, in fact, the Holy Spirit leading a man to a full recognition of his God.

It never disturbed him before, although he always knew that there existed, above all things here on earth, a source of greatness and power which man will never be able fully to comprehend, but which concerns him to a great extent. As he contemplated these things, he felt assured that it was this mysterious power that had been pursuing him. And he finally worked out the solution in this way: That this power was God, his God, his Father, the Creator of all things, the Ruler over all, and Whom all men must acknowledge sooner or later. As he further contemplated this a light began to dawn upon him.

"And I have recognized Him only in part," he thought. Suddenly his soul awakened to the fact, that, no matter how hard one tried to live correctly in the eyes of the world, it would be of no avail for his eternal good if it lacked this full recognition.

While in the midst of this deep communion, there stole over him a great humility, as though he were bowed to the dust with a keen sense of his unworthiness. And a great cry seemed to go out from the very depths of his soul, as he suddenly surrendered himself entirely, to be led by the still small voice into the secret presence of his God.

We can not intrude farther into the sacredness of the things that followed; but when the glimmer in the eastern sky told him that another day was at hand, he started in surprise, and as he rose to seek his bed for a few hours' sleep, he knew that he was a new man, born again by the rejuvenation of the

spirit. He discovered at last what life should mean to every man. What God intended that it should mean to the one He created in His own image.

He slept until nearly noon, but awakened with a throbbing head and aching body. He discovered also that he had some fever, and thought it advisable to have his valet call in a physician. He came late in the afternoon, and pronounced it a heavy cold.

The news of his illness spread rapidly, and was much exaggerated. Many inquiries were made at the hotel, and numerous notes were received, offering assistance. Soon boxes of flowers and beautiful growing plants began to come, until his room looked like a veritable bower.

There was one huge box, filled with the rarest blossoms that the London florists could supply, which contained Adele Kingsley's card, accompanied also by a dainty, scented note, expressing her sympathy, and hoping for a speedy recovery. He was conscious of no disturbance whatever on receiving it, except a feeling of great pity. He wondered if she had misunderstood him; evidently she had, or how could she treat him in this way, after speaking to her as he did? He imagined that she would feel humiliated to the very dust, under the circumstances. But he did not tax himself long in trying to understand her actions.

Since that wonderful change had taken place the night before, a sweet peace had entered his soul, and he was conscious of a calmness and strength which made him feel equal to conquering a city. A new

feeling had developed in his heart toward all mankind, for the evolution of new principles had begun to take place, as is always the case with one as he grows closer in communion with the spirit.

So absorbed was he in the contemplation of new thoughts and desires that this change had wrought, he was hardly conscious of his physical ailments.

"Ah, yes!" he thought. "I see now that much scepticism exists on account of our perverseness and refusal to submit our will to God's, and to abolish this there is only one remedy—a complete change of heart, which can only be brought about by our complete surrender and willingness to be led by the influence of the Holy Spirit."

Every little while his thoughts returned to Evelyn Drayton; she seemed now to fill a greater need in his nature; it was a keen delight to let his thoughts dwell upon her. Although she had interested him and appealed to him in many ways, he had not realized before how closely she had wound herself about his heart. She had always appeared so far above him in purity, so exalted in character, that it had never occurred to him for an instant that it was possible for him to love her, and win her as his bride. Nevertheless, since he had separated from her, her hold on him had been steadily growing stronger, as that other hold loosened inch by inch.

He began to wonder if there could be any truth in the rumors he had heard of John Burney's paying her marked attention. The thought disturbed him not a little.

"It is very natural, though, that she should marry a minister, and from all accounts, John Burney is in every way worthy of her," he soliloquized. "But I must know if it is true. Why—why, I love her myself!" his heart suddenly cried out, as the truth dawned upon him. "I have loved her all along, and didn't know it!"

Yes, in the wake of that great spiritual awakening and discovery came the other great need and discovery. All baser passions had been eliminated in the birth of the spiritual man; and Adele Kingsley had passed out of his life, and in her place entered the one for whom his whole being now craved, the one who appealed to everything that was the noblest and best in his nature. For the first time in his life, he knew that love in its purest and highest sense had at last been revealed to him, there was no doubting it whatever, and it was growing in its beauty and intensity all the time.

He regretted that the discovery had not been made before he left Clover Hills: he might have had a chance, perhaps, of winning her. "But have I no chance now, at all?" he asked himself. "I may have." The desire seized him then to write to her, and learn his fate; to delay doing so, might be missing that chance. He concluded, however, to wait until he received her letter. It might contain something that would give him an insight into the true state of this affair with John Burney.

In three days he was about again, and on the fourth, Evelyn's letter came. It was a relief,

greater than he ever could have expressed, that he could detect in it nothing more than a friendly interest in John Burney; and he sat down that very day to write to her. He composed three letters before he could get one to suit him; after which, he answered a pile that had been accumulating since his illness; and, taking the package in his hand, he started out to post them and take a little stroll.

When he reached the exchange, he walked toward the letter box, looking carefully over the package, to see, principally, if the most important one of them all was safe. He was so intent upon the letters that he did not notice two ladies approaching, and he started when he heard himself addressed; and, looking up, saw Adele Kingsley and her mother.

"Frank Whitfield!" exclaimed Adele. "How is this? We thought you were still in bed, and have come to inquire after you."

"Yes, we were beginning to feel quite anxious about you," said Mrs. Kingsley. "And as an old friend of the family, I felt it my duty to take you in hand, if we had found you no better this morning."

"Thank you very kindly," returned Whitfield. "But I am glad to say that I am now on the road to recovery. I took cold at the fête, I believe, but it was nothing serious."

"Then you are able to drive back with me, and mother can remain over night in London with Aunt Mary, and go with her to meet some relatives who arrive to-morrow," suggested Adele, who was extremely vivacious and cordial in her manner.

"Do," agreed Mrs. Kingsley. "The change will do you good, and Adele will be delighted to have your company. She has not been well, you know, and I disliked to leave her so long, refusing to accompany my sister on that account. But if you will spend the remainder of the day with her, I guess she can tide over the night without me."

"Certainly, Mother; I will get along all right, and Aunt Mary is so anxious to have you.—Here she comes now. She was to meet us here," turning to Whitfield.

As Mrs. Ford approached the trio, Whitfield quickly changed the package of letters to his left hand, and gave a step forward to greet her.

His eyes being on the approaching woman, he did not notice one of the letters dropping between himself and Adele as he transferred them. But when he made the move forward, Adele saw it go down to the floor very close to her. She gave one short step, and her skirts covered it.

"You haven't said yet whether or not you would drive home with me," she said, leaning toward him, while she manœuvred to place her foot upon the letter. "Come!" coaxed she—"don't say no—it is such a beautiful day. I will pour you out a cup of tea, and give you a dainty morsel to eat—"

Whitfield laughed.

"I can't refuse that dainty morsel!" said he; "it is too tempting to an invalid who has been living on hotel fare."

"Oh, I'm so glad! The drive will do you a world

of good, Frank; you look pale after your close confinement. Come, put your letters in the box and let us be off," suggested she. "I never saw such a package! Are they all for America?"

"Every one," replied he, stepping over to the box. The instant his back was turned, Adele let fall her jacket she had been carrying on her arm, and as she raised it from the floor, managed to lift the letter with it. "I am determined to ascertain the destination of at least one in that package," thought she.

The whole act was done so quickly, that she was by his side before he had dropped all the letters. He was anxious for one last look at that particular letter, but Adele was looking over his arm and watching him closely, so he dropped the remainder in the box at once.

They all moved out of the hotel together, and separated on the sidewalk, Adele and Whitfield taking the carriage.

Whitfield had intended calling on Adele and her relatives before he left for Oxford. The friendly relations of the two families necessitated his doing this; but he did not fancy making the call in just this way. Not that he entertained any of his old fears, but he would have preferred avoiding a tête-à-tête, which appeared now impossible. However, there were some favorable features about it. He could act for once without any fear whatever of being tempted, and also have an opportunity of dispelling for good, any idea she may have entertained, that he was in love with her.

He watched her closely while he listened to her running conversation on that long ride. He wondered time and again how it was she ever came to wield over him such an infatuation. But instead of the bitter hatred he experienced on that memorable night, his pity took deeper root in his heart for her, and the words that she had spoken one evening in Clover Hills he repeatedly recalled. "Would Evelyn Drayton be the girl she is, brought up in my place?—an only child, petted, indulged, and waited upon all my life." And he concluded, that she hardly could have escaped being what she was, under the circumstances. And what might she not have been, he mused, as she talked away, wealthy, handsome, and gifted, if she had only made the proper use of her talents.

While he silently studied her, he wondered if there couldn't be some influence brought to bear upon her, that might change entirely the perverted view of life that her actions had dictated.

"Oh, Evelyn, how my heart goes out to you this morning!" he thought once, gazing out over the peaceful fields and valleys. "You have taught me a religion of which I never dreamed—one of charity, love, and kindness to all God's creatures."

He had a splendid opportunity to study Adele on this ride, there being few chances for him to talk, even if he had desired, for she kept up a constant chatter. He never saw her in such a talkative mood, never so gay in spirits.

Frequently her laugh rang out at the slightest

provocation; in fact, very often he could discover no cause whatever for her hilarity. Then, too, her witty sayings and repartee indicated more than ordinary alertness. He noted, however, the dark circles under her eyes, and a pinched, drawn look, which was quite pronounced when her face was in repose.

She had manœuvred to place the letter in an inside pocket of her coat before slipping it on, and every now and then would press her hand against it, to be sure that it was safe.

"Your health appears to be wonderfully improved," he remarked once, during a pause, which occurred very seldom.

At this, her countenance changed, and a peculiar look came into her eyes that made Whitfield feel uneasy, so unnatural was it.

"One can't always judge by appearances," she retorted. "As I told you before, I am even more nervous now than I was at Clover Hills, and my health is not nearly so good."

"Then your own prescription failed?"

"I believe the attack is bound to run its course, no matter what I do," she answered excitedly. "But I would have been still worse if I continued making a recluse of myself. I suppose you think I have recovered, because I have ceased to talk about myself, and because I am to some extent entering into social life again. But you are mistaken. I am to-day a nervous invalid.—Pshaw! never mind—what's the odds what I am!" she laughed, changing her mood again in an instant. "Do you know what

I am doing, Frank?—curing myself by a sort of Christian Science process. Some one told me not to think that I was ill, and I would soon recover.”

“I haven’t much faith in the Christian Science idea, Adele, but I have in mental science, and cases like yours and mine can be helped wonderfully by will power.”

“That’s just my idea exactly. I am using my will nowadays for all it’s worth. But let us talk about pleasanter things. Nervous invalids should never discuss their ailments.”

On arriving at the house, Adele led Whitfield to the library, and told him to make himself at home, until she changed her dress, and they would have tea.

Not until she reached her room and bolted the door did she make any attempt to look at the letter she had secured. She trembled visibly as she drew it from her pocket, and when she saw that it was addressed to Evelyn Drayton, she became hysterical. It was some time before she succeeded in controlling herself. The temptation to open it was almost irresistible, but she finally concluded to postpone it until after the interview with Whitfield, on which she had staked her last hope in bringing things to a climax before his departure for Oxford.

Nearly an hour had passed before she returned to Whitfield, beautifully gowned and be-jeweled, her eyes sparkling with an unnatural brightness and her manner strangely excited, as though under the influence of some exhilarating drug.

"Now, Frank, there is no other alternative for you this afternoon than to obey orders," she began, laughing immoderately, and shaking a playful finger. "You are a sick man and must consent to my waiting upon you. To begin with, please sit down," she demanded sternly, with a stamp of her foot; then suddenly broke into a merry peal of laughter, as Whitfield obediently complied.

"It's very polite, considerate, and all that sort of thing, to stand when I do. But I will excuse you this afternoon," she rattled on. "Sit down this instant," she cried suddenly, with another stamp of her foot, when Whitfield thoughtlessly rose again to take a chair from her, which she had picked up to carry to the table.

"Oh," said he, "I forgot!"—obeying the command, and watching her with a new interest, as a physician would in dissecting some puzzling subject. He was beginning to feel some alarm at her actions. "Can it be that she is playing a new rôle," he thought, "assisted by a drug?"

She burst into a prolonged laugh when Whitfield passively submitted again to her command.

"Didn't I tell you that my besetting sins were idleness and selfishness?" said she. "Now let me redeem myself, by forgetting my own important self in waiting upon another.—There you go again! Now isn't it exasperating! Sit down!" she ordered, as he started to pick up a spoon she had dropped. "You don't seem to understand that I mean what I say, and that I *will* be obeyed. No more of this non-

sense now, remember! You are pale, weak, and hardly able to stand.—Goodness, Frank! You look as grave as a funeral! What a jovial guest you are, for one to entertain at four o'clock tea! Come, cheer up—you give me the horrors with that long-drawn face.

“By the way, why didn't you tell me you were ill the evening of the fête? No wonder you acted so strangely, with fever burning in your veins. I might have been able to have done something for you. I know this much—I never would have permitted you to return to London alone if I had known it.”

“Thank you, but I did not think it necessary to alarm others and make a scene,” said Whitfield gravely, a shiver passing through him as he recalled their interview that evening. It was to him like a hideous nightmare, which he longed to blot out forever from his memory. It humiliated him as he had never been before, to think that it had been possible for him to have been influenced by such a woman all these months. But he realized now that he was facing another ordeal, which was giving him great concern as to the most advisable thing to do under the circumstances.

“I saw very plainly that there was something wrong with you,” Adele commenced again. “But I could not quite make you out. At times you appeared most indifferent to me; and then, when you spoke so harshly, with no reason whatever—Oh, what a blow that was! Do you know, I didn't

sleep all night, thinking about it. But when the news reached me of your illness, it of course explained all, and I forgave you. No, I do not believe you were yourself, and consequently wholly unaccountable for your actions. I remembered afterwards how flushed your face was. You poor dear man!—why, your temperature must at least have been one hundred and four.”

Whitfield nodded gravely.

“Mercy, Frank! Brace up!” she laughed. “I never saw you so sad.”

“On the contrary, I never felt so happy,” said he, a smile illuminating his whole face.

“Hum!” grunted Adele. “I see no evidence of it whatever,” eyeing him suspiciously. “Why, I never heard you talk less.”

“I am only trying to be polite. Two persons cannot talk at the same time,” said he in playful repartee.

“That is ‘the most unkindest cut of all.’ I’ll get even with you for that!” she laughed gayly. “But never mind! I mustn’t forget that you are an invalid, and must be cajoled, petted, and coaxed, and also readily forgiven when you say unkind things. What a state you must have been in that evening! Why, sometimes I don’t believe you heard a word that I said. We started out so beautifully, if you remember—a veritable heart-to-heart talk; when gradually you appeared to lose all interest, and grew dreamy and listless.”

Whitfield’s brows knit, and he gazed out of the window in silence.

"Never mind—don't worry about it. I won't talk of it any more," she said in a crooning tone, stepping over to him and giving his shoulder a little pat.

This Whitfield resented very pronouncedly, by a quick movement to the other side of the chair, turning his eyes toward her with a look of deep displeasure. Just for one instant Adele straightened up with a defiant air, and returned his gaze with that strange wild stare that puzzled and annoyed him. Then she burst into a peal of laughter so prolonged that Whitfield stared at her apprehensively. The situation was indeed growing alarming.

CHAPTER XXIV.

While Adele stood laughing, a maid entered the room with a tray, on which were tea, sandwiches, and fruit. Adele's hilarity came to a sudden stop, as she hurried over to assist her.

"Now you may get up and sit down at the table with me," she said, nodding toward Whitfield.

When everything was in readiness, the maid left the room.

The instant the door closed, Adele leaned over the table, and gazed at Whitfield with that same unnatural stare he had noticed ever since he met her in London.

"Frank," she said hoarsely, in suppressed excitement, "I want to talk very plainly with you to-day; and first of all, I desire to say that I do not believe you ever understood me; then I would like to know why you act so strangely, and plan to avoid me so frequently."

Her throat filled up, and her voice grew so thick she had to clear it before she finished.

All along Whitfield felt that there was some indefinable climax to which she had been cunningly and stealthily leading; and he had been quietly preparing himself for it, coming to the conclusion that this whole affair between Adele and himself should now be settled forever if she was at all amenable to reason in her present condition.

As she sat opposite him she was physically a ravishing picture, dressed in a gown of unusual becomingness, of some soft crepe material, a delicate shade of the ashes of rose.

Strange though it may seem, for the first time there existed no charm whatever in all this for Whitfield, as he sat calm, grave, and wonderfully self-possessed.

He did not answer her immediately, lifting his cup and taking a sip of the tea. Adele breathed hard while she waited; then she unclasped her hands, and with trembling fingers raised her own cup to her lips.

"Adele," he began slowly, as he set down the cup, his eyes now full upon her, "you are an enigma to me, I confess. For months past, your actions have been incomprehensible; invariably you have met me with a chip on your shoulder. My very presence appears to stir up a mysterious something that excites your anger—especially noticeable was it at Clover Hills—and why this should be, I fail to understand. I am totally unconscious of doing anything to insure your displeasure, and if I seem to avoid you, it is only your own actions to which it can be attributed."

"You think my actions strange, incomprehensible, do you?" she cried in a stifled voice, her chest heaving and her eyes flashing fire. "Well, perhaps you are right!—but there were good reasons for it, and if you are so blind that you cannot see, then I must enlighten you. It is because I love you—

yes, love you!" she gasped, in a broken, smothered voice. "Now you will hate me for that confession, I know! So be it then—for the time has come when I can bear this strain no longer—when I must speak, no matter what the consequences may be. Yes, I confess it again!" she cried hysterically. "I love you, and with a love of which few women are capable. And yet you spurn it—if not, why is it that you are so indifferent, so cold, so unresponsive? I, too, might say that your own actions have been most incomprehensible to me for a year past, and now I want the mystery cleared!"

She paused for an instant, as though to gain strength to continue, and shot Whitfield a piercing look.

He folded his hands before him on the table, and looked at her intently, with a slight flush coming into his cheeks, but otherwise with no signs of emotion.

"Day after day have I dreamed, hoped, and longed for some little sign of response," she went on. "But still you remained as cold and impenetrable as the Egyptian sphinx, and I was repeatedly doomed to disappointment. Vain and selfish you may have thought me, but oh, what a transformation your love would have wrought in me! Ah, yes!" she sighed—"it would even have been possible for you to have shaped my nature according to your high ideals."

She rose now in her agitation, but kept her eyes steadily upon him. He rose also, and a look of

deep pity came into his eyes, which Adele misconstrued.

"I believe I do detect some little response after all!" she thought, catching at this ray of hope as a drowning man at a straw.

"Frank—Frank!" she choked—"you will at least try to love me, won't you?"—moving stealthily toward him with arms held out entreatingly, but looking more like some serpent ready to spring upon its prey, than a woman pleading for love.

Her eyes were now in truth wild and demon-like, leaving no doubt whatever in Whitfield's mind of the suspicions he had had all along—that she was under the influence of some drug, and had taken more on her return from London.

The situation was not an enviable one, but the young man rose to the occasion. He wondered himself at his coolness, and the miraculous change in his feelings toward this woman. He did not move as she came toward him, until she drew very near; then he reached out and took her hands firmly in his.

"If you want me to listen to you, Adele, you must sit down and compose yourself," he said, leading her to a chair. She dropped into it, panting and trembling, and Whitfield drew up another, and sat facing her.

She threw back her head, and lowered her eyes for an instant under his steady gaze.

"Forgive me—forgive me, Frank!" she cried huskily. "I could not help it! Your coldness has

driven me frantic. Several times I attributed it all to some other woman coming between us, but now I am uncertain—all my suspicions appear to be groundless in that respect. Oh, Frank, Frank!—have you no pity for me, no return for the great love I bear you?”

It was a terrible ordeal for Whitfield to remain and listen to all this, especially as he knew now she was in no condition to reason things out in a rational manner. And although he pitied her, he did not have the same sympathy as he would have for one who had fallen in love with him in a pure sense. For love, pure love, will change one's life completely; no matter where it enters, it is possible for it to make a heart of stone pliable and unselfish. It will uplift the soul to a purer conception of everything in life, and make of it a beautiful dream.

But Whitfield knew that this was not the nature of Adele Kingsley's love for him.

“I regret very much, Adele, that you should have allowed yourself to be so influenced by a love which you knew could never be returned,” he said, watching closely the effect of his words. “Are you not able to see that we could never make a congenial couple? A difference of tastes and tempers alone would suffice to keep us apart. You would not eventually be happy, with me as your husband, nor I with you as my wife. At some future time, I feel quite confident, you will fully realize this. You really do not love me, Adele; it

is only an infatuation, that is all, with nothing back of it to build on. And when one comes to think of a union for life, there must be something more than a mere infatuation of the senses."

Adele writhed at this like one in torture, and a feverish brightness spread over her whole face. She leaned forward, and made a motion as though to snatch for his hand, riveting her burning gaze upon him. Then she sprang to her feet in her agitation.

"Ah, yes—I see! You think, as most men do of the sex when they declare love unasked, that it cannot be the genuine thing. Infatuation, is it?—bah! You know nothing about it! And I can see no reason why a woman should not be permitted to express her love, when her whole happiness is at stake. What are mere conventionalities to me in a moment like this, especially—"

She cleared her throat, and gave a shrill laugh. "Especially," she repeated—"when I feel now that had you never seen *her*, I might have been your choice to-day! Oh, Frank, Frank! What does she know of love, that poor little unsophisticated church mouse! It would simply be impossible for her to make you happy."

"You must not speak of Miss Drayton in that way! You do her a great injustice," said Whitfield, his whole countenance expressing great indignation at the very mention of Evelyn's name in a time like this. But realizing also, that it would be worse than folly to express his resentment in any

way but the mildest in the presence of this half-crazed woman. "If you love me as you say you do, you are expressing it in a very peculiar way, Adele; but I will excuse you, because I know you are not yourself this afternoon. Come, let us finish our tea and drop the subject for to-day."

She started toward the table as though to comply, but suddenly changed her mind, and sank down again into the chair from which she had just risen.

"It may be a peculiar way, if you will have it so!" snapped she, with an ugly gleam in her eye, and her chest heaving rapidly again with an uncontrollable emotion. "But it is the only way left for me to take, and in my nervous condition it is impossible for me to be calm. I know my heart, my mind, better than you!" she cried in a choking voice. "And I am sure that I could be perfectly happy with you forever—and not only so, but I am sure that I could also make *you* happy. I would study your every wish. Ah, Frank, you could not help but love me! No other woman in the world would do for you as I would. Do have pity on me, and don't destroy my whole life!—leave it to me to make your life one of joy, of perfect happiness!"

She rose again, her excitement getting the better of her.

"You do not love Evelyn Drayton, do you, Frank?—nor Miss Alexander," holding out her arms imploringly.

Whitfield backed off from the advancing figure so that a chair stood between them. A cry of fury escaped from Adele at this, and she faced him with blazing eyes.

"Please be calm, Adele! Do not say any more," he said firmly, but with such quiet dignity that for an instant the stronger will swayed her, and she cowered before him. "You'll regret this to-morrow. You don't realize what you are saying. I am sure you are not well. I think it advisable for me to go, and reason all this out with you at another time, when you are in a better frame of mind."

With these words, Adele felt that her doom was sealed, her last hope shattered. He really did not care anything for her, there was no doubting it any longer. She felt as though suddenly crushed to dust by some great weight, the effect of defeated love wringing in her heart. Notwithstanding her feverishly excited brain, she was able to realize that he was in truth lost to her forever, and the very thought appeared almost to break the last slender link that held will and reason together.

"Go, then, go!" she cried, beating the back of a chair with her fist. "Hard, cruel, heartless man that you are, what matters it to you whether or not you break a heart, ruin a life—what does it, I repeat!"

To even make an attempt to argue with her now, was altogether out of the question, and Whitfield felt that the kindest act he could perform, under the circumstances, was to get away as quickly as possible.

Without a word he started for the door. He turned, when half way, and faced the wild panting woman, who was watching him with a look that made his blood turn chill.

"Good-bye, Adele," said he. "You are in no condition to entertain callers. When you think of this in your calmer moments, I know you will thank me for this abrupt leave-taking."

She hardly thought he actually meant to go, but when she found that he was in earnest, she hurried after him.

"No, no! Don't go!" she cried, her voice now broken and pitiful. "Frank, Frank, come back!" she called. "You shall not leave me!" But he had already opened the door, and the next instant he had disappeared.

Her first impulse was to run after him and continue her wild passionate denunciations, but the thought of that letter upstairs arrested her. Yes, I will read it now, she decided, with a cry of exultation.

"I will have my revenge. It explains all—all!" she hissed, running up the stairs to her room. "Frank Whitfield would never correspond with any woman of whom he did not think a great deal. Yes, yes—Evelyn Drayton is the one! I am sure of it after his actions this afternoon! And now I shall see what he has to say to you, my little saint," she chuckled, with a laugh that was demonical, as she snatched the letter from its hiding-place under some clothing in a drawer.

She hurried with it to the window, and held it up to the light at all angles in her endeavors to make out some of the words. But though her overwrought nerves and heated brain gave to her eyes a luster and fierceness that seemed strong enough to penetrate a stone wall, they could not decipher so much as one word.

"Why did I ever doubt it for an instant, fool that I was!" she muttered, shaking the letter over her head. "But now I have something that will compensate, in a measure, at least—something that will explain the true state of affairs," she gloated. "And what is to hinder me from satisfying my curiosity? Has not Providence placed it in my hands as my right? Of course! What does she know about love, that little recluse, posing as an angel? She shall never receive it—never, never, never! I swear. A chance of a life-time, this—so here goes!"—bursting into a smothered hysterical laugh. Trembling and panting, she seated herself, and broke the seal without further hesitation.

When she saw its length, a stifled sob escaped her, and she pressed her hand upon her heart as if to stifle its anguish, and closed her eyes for an instant to gather strength for the ordeal, then she spread it out before her, and read:

"MY DEAR MISS DRAYTON:

"Your letter reached me on Tuesday, and was welcomely received. It has given me much food for thought, and I have read it over many times.

"I have some wonderful news to relate, which I am not able to keep any longer. I have solved the problem, and am gaining steadily in spiritual strength and knowledge every day.

"As I look back, I cannot understand how I could have been so indifferent to my spiritual welfare. Never until last spring have I felt sufficiently interested to study the doctrine of any religion. And yet I have always believed that there is a life of purity and happiness for the one who is willing to guide his life by the Divine Law. But, as I think I have mentioned previously to you, I simply did not choose to seek that life, because worldly things held me in their grip, and, as you well know, one cannot live both for Mammon and God. But I see now the meaning, the purpose, of the crucifixion, and realize that as long as we are content with sin, it is impossible to serve God or to know him.

"For a time my greatest aspiration was for fame. To make a name for myself in the profession of law. But I have been brought face to face with the fact that fame alone, would not carry me over the border line to the great unknown, and that there is nothing in the world's gods that can satisfy and sustain, when we feel life slipping away from us.

"You will never know how much you have done to bring about this transformation in my life, over which I now rejoice, and for which I would not give the whole world in exchange did I possess it.

"And now I have something else to tell you which will also be a surprise and I tremble at the thought of how it will be received. It is simply this, my dear Miss Drayton—that I love you better than anyone on earth. And as I look back now, I know that I have loved you for some time past, but was not altogether aware of it. Do you remember my telling you, on the night we parted, that there could never be another who could take your place? I did not realize then just how much that remark covered. This

separation, however, has revealed to me my true feelings toward you, and just how dear and necessary you are to me. To-day that remark means a thousandfold more to me than it did then—or, I should say, than I was conscious of at the time.

"Frequently have I sat thinking about you, and all our little talks; I have pictured us together in the solitude of the woodlands, while I told you of my love in person instead of this poor way, and I have wondered how you would receive it. I have tried to imagine my happiness if it met with any response in your heart, and also the state of my feelings if I saw no encouragement whatever in your eyes. Yes, I have even pictured to myself the calamity, should I hear that you are already promised to another. However I finally concluded that there was no other alternative for me than to write and tell you about it.

"That you have unfolded to me so much of your life and sacred thoughts is the one hope I have at least of your close friendship, confidence and mutual sympathy; and until I hear from you I will at all events keep up my courage and live in the hopes of hearing something favorable from you. Never, my dear Evelyn, in my imagination, my wildest fancies, have I ever dreamed of a love like this.

"I was beginning to think that my nature was one that was incapable of being awakened to love in the highest sense. But in a moment, it seemed, the revelation came, and my whole heart went out to you in a love and sympathy so great, so deep, I know not how to express it.

"The thought of ever possessing your love, and the pleasure and profit of your society for life, seems almost too great a happiness for me to be ever capable of attaining, therefore I am schooling myself to meet the blow, should it come.

"Is it not almost time for you to leave Clover Hills? How anxious I will be to learn of your progress in assuming your new duties next winter, and to know how

you like Philadelphia, and also of your father's health, for which you all entertain such hopes. May the rest do even more for him than you have ever anticipated.

"And now I must say good-by. I know you will not keep me waiting in this suspense one minute longer than necessary. And how I will look forward to that letter! God give me strength to keep up my courage, and God bless you and keep you, the dearest and best of women!

"Yours devotedly,

"FRANK WHITFIELD."

The effect of this letter on the half-crazed woman can better be imagined than described, as her wild eyes roved along the lines, each word giving her a fresh surprise, a new pang.

She breathed rapidly in her excitement, and her whole body trembled and swayed as though seized with a severe chill. At times the letter fell from her trembling fingers.

It would be impossible for any language to describe the agony, the hopeless despair that seized her as she proceeded to the end, with the one predominant thought—that her whole existence had been irreparably blighted forever.

As she neared the close of the letter, she was conscious of her strength failing her. The words began to dance before her eyes, and a smothered sensation seized her. She made one last desperate effort, and managed to read it to the end, when her body fell forward in a swoon.

CHAPTER XXV.

Everything seemed to have shaped itself in the most satisfactory manner after the Draytons moved to Philadelphia.

Evelyn was more than pleased with her position in one of the private schools of the city, and had also the good fortune to secure one in the choir of a church near her home, which they all attended. Then, too, Elinore returned from her trip abroad in such good health and spirits, that one would hardly take her for the same girl who left Clover Hills in the spring, pale, languid, and low-spirited. She took hold of her work at the Conservatory with a vim, at which they all marveled. And best of all, the clergyman was slowly but steadily improving. They did not look for a miracle in the way of a sudden cure, in so far as he was concerned.

The most trying ordeal for the Draytons in leaving Clover Hills was the parting with the Bentleys. Though Mrs. Bentley had recovered sufficiently to be about again before they left, she was far from being a well woman, and the thought of losing her best friends caused a great depression of her spirits. In her sorrow, ill-health, and domestic deficiencies she had become so dependent on the clergyman's family, it was a question with her how she would ever manage to get along without them.

Mrs. Drayton and Evelyn had thought very

seriously of asking her outright in regard to her relatives, being convinced that they were people of means, and who would no doubt, be glad to assist her, if she would only make her condition known to them. But she absolutely ignored the subject whenever they attempted to make the least reference to it. They knew that she was living on a very scant income of her own, because Evelyn had frequently attended to some of her business matters in times of sickness, and they also knew that Mr. Bentley was not contributing as much as a penny toward the support of the family.

Altogether, it was a case that awakened their deepest interest, as well as sympathy. But all that they were able to do under the circumstances, was to win a promise from her to write, in case of sickness or any trouble in which they could be of assistance.

Although to all outward indications Evelyn appeared as happy as the other members of the household, she was in reality carrying a heart secret that was affecting her not a little. To be so abruptly ignored by Whitfield, after his urgent desire for the correspondence, was a disappointment from which she could not rally. She tried in every way to work out the unsolvable problem of his apparent rudeness in leaving her letter unanswered, by every conceivable excuse that might justify such an act. But the mystery still remained as deep as ever.

Her nature was one not easily disturbed by trivial things. Hers had been heretofore the kind

of happiness that belongs to the innocent and pure in heart. All trials and sorrows that had come into her life previous to this, she had fought and conquered without allowing them to affect her happiness to any serious extent. But the fact of Whitfield's passing entirely out of her life, with not even enough friendly interest to answer her letter, the character of which she had never before written to any gentleman, threw a damper on her spirits, that even with all her Christian faith it seemed impossible to overcome. Try as she would, she could not shake the great influence this love was exerting over her, absorbing her more and more every day.

It was this that gave her more sympathy for the childish, unreasonable actions of Marie and Adele. She could readily understand, now, how love would be likely to influence certain temperaments, and make them insanely jealous, unhappy, and miserable, when the object of their affections turned the cold shoulder toward them.

Like Whitfield, she, too, had only pity for Adele Kingsley, even though she knew that there was no reason whatever for Adele to be jealous of her. She had answered the letter she received from her at Clover Hills, which was followed by a regular correspondence, lasting for some weeks. She deemed it advisable, for politeness sake, to answer the letters. But Adele finally ceased writing, on her return to New York late in the fall.

Her letters had afforded Evelyn a great deal of

amusement, as she was keen enough to see Adele's only aim in writing. Even after she had read that sacred letter of Whitfield's to Evelyn, Adele made every effort to poison Evelyn's mind against him, by all sorts of cunning devices in the way of clever wording, that intimated many things. But Evelyn felt convinced that her letters contained very little that was true. She had also taken great pains to speak of Whitfield and Miss Alexander, in a way that might readily arouse her jealousy under any other circumstances.

Later on, however, when Evelyn saw mentioned in the society news of two New York papers, that an engagement was expected to be announced in the fall, of Frank Whitfield and a Miss Alexander, whom he had met in London, she was forced to believe that there was, after all, truth in some of Adele's statements, and in all probability it was the reason for her bringing the correspondence to an end, having no more interest in her, after she had discovered Frank Whitfield's attentions were in reality placed elsewhere.

All that Evelyn heard of Adele now, was through Marie's letters. She was still very nervous, and becoming a great source of anxiety to her parents.

There was a cheeriness about Marie's letters that was a great source of pleasure to Evelyn, who had taken a great interest in her. For some weeks past, Scott's name was mentioned quite frequently in them. From all accounts, he was very attentive and Evelyn could think of but one motive in all

this, over which she rejoiced. Since that Sunday evening she had neither seen him, nor heard from him.

The Draytons had made many new friends and acquaintances since their coming to Philadelphia. Being a minister's family, they were much sought after by the church members, and through several relatives and old friends residing in the city, they met many people. Their aristocratic family connections, together with their refinement of manner, culture, and accomplishments, were sufficient credentials for the most fastidious. But they were able to avail themselves only of a few of the opportunities offered them in a social way, owing to their busy lives and straitened circumstances.

Whatever their deprivations were in this respect, it was a matter of no concern whatever with Evelyn, whose interest in such pleasures had undergone a great change. She made no effort, on her part, to seek acquaintances or cultivate friendships; in fact, it was becoming a bore to entertain anyone, and she had lost the old enthusiasm over things that had previously been a pleasure. There was always that great vacancy in her heart, of which she was ever conscious. Then, too, she was not altogether in the best physical condition, and she noticed at times a lack of energy, and the same languid enervating feeling she had experienced, for the first time, just prior to their leaving Clover Hills.

Late, one evening in January, she stood at the

parlor window, looking out after a gentleman who had been spending the evening with her. She was curious to see how he would manage to make his way through the snow and the high wind that was blowing. When he disappeared from view, she still stood gazing out at the snow, deep in thought, when Betsy entered the room.

"Oh, Betsy, I do wish you would go to bed, and not wait up for me every time I have company!" Evelyn spoke up in a tone of displeasure.

Betsy stood still an instant, and turned toward her sharply; it was unusual for Evelyn to speak in such a manner.

"Now, chile, 'doan' talk 'bout dat subjec' any moh!" said she, starting off again toward the window. "Hasn't I tole yo' time an' agin dat it's jes' de same t' me t' doze in de cheer as t' sleep in de bed? Besides, what yo' think I is, honey, t' travel upstyars an' leave de lady ob de house t' get her death ob cold brushin' off snow an boltin' shutters? Fo' de Lawd!" she gasped, "jes' see dat!" —a gust of wind and snow blowing in upon her as she raised the window, nearly taking her breath. "It's sut'ny am 'bliged fo' all yo' commiseration fo' me, chile," she continued, after she managed to get the shutters together, "but yo' got it in de wrong place. I jes' wish dat yo' kep' some fo' yo'se'f. 'Pears t' me yo're burning de candle at bofe ends, an' ef yo' doan' tek keer an' use some ob dat commiseration fo' yo'se'f, de fust thing yo' know, de candle will snuff out 'fo' it's time.

Now jes' stan' back, honey, ouden de draft," she cautioned, stepping over to the window where Evelyn stood.

She was just about to comply when she was attracted by a group on the other side.

"Look, Betsy!" she cried. "There's a poor woman and several children out in all this storm. She appears to be looking for a number."

"Fo' de Lawd!" gasped Betsy. "I b'lieve she's 'toxicated. See how unstiddy she walks."

"I don't see how she could do anything else in a storm like this," said Evelyn, "with a child in her arms and two clinging to her skirts. Come, let us go to the door and call her over. It makes my heart ache to see them—they must be nearly frozen."

When the door opened, they saw the woman coming across the street.

"Oh, Betsy, it's Mrs. Bentley!" exclaimed Evelyn. "Poor woman!—I know something terrible has happened, or she never would be here looking for us on such a night. Quick—get them inside!"

The next instant Betsy was hustling two children in the house, Evelyn the baby, Mrs. Bentley coming up in the rear as best she could. They were all escorted to the dining-room and the door closed, that the other members of the family might not be disturbed, all having retired.

"Don't tell me anything now, Mrs. Bentley—wait a little while," said Evelyn, when with tears in her eyes the poor woman attempted to explain things.

"Jes' look at dis bressed chile!" said Betsy, lifting off the large shawl that enveloped the baby. "It's jes' laik de sun sud'ny brekin' loose from de clouds, and dat's de signif'cation dat yo're troubles are all ended—" with a nod toward Mrs. Bentley.

"Isn't he a dear—and actually laughing!" said Evelyn. "He knows he is in a warm place now, and is comfortable and happy."

Poor Mrs. Bentley tried to smile.

"You don't know what it has cost me to do this, Miss Drayton, but there was no other alternative," she said in a choking voice.

"You could not have decided on a wiser plan, Mrs. Bentley. But I will listen to your story when we get you all thawed out," said Evelyn, who with Betsy's assistance, was taking off wraps and overshoes, and rubbing the hands of them all in turn, which were blue and numb with the cold.

"'Deed, we'll hab yo' all warm as toast pres'ny," spoke up Betsy, whose heart was in its right place, after all. "Now, Miss Evelyn, yo' jes' look after de baby and de mother, while I put de kittle on fo' cup ob tea, an' get some milk fo' de baby. Come," she went on, with a knowing look at the two older children—"see what Betsy's got fo' yo' out heah—" holding out a hand toward each in a motherly way.

They were at her side in an instant, each with a little cold hand clasped in one of her big black warm ones, and led to the kitchen with beaming faces.

"Miss Drayton, I am absolutely destitute," Mrs.

Bentley began, the instant Betsy and the children disappeared. "I haven't a penny, and my husband, I believe, has deserted me. I have not seen him, nor heard anything of him, for a month past. I have been nearly driven insane, and had it not been for the children, I would have been tempted to take my life. My nerves are shattered, and I am almost a physical wreck. Yesterday I drew from the bank of Clover Hills all the money I had in the world, paid the rent that was owing, some other bills, and gave even my furniture up in payment for several debts, the money not being sufficient to cover all. ' As I have no friends in the world but you, there was no alternative for me but to come here for advice and help. I thought perhaps your father could place the children in a home for me, and I would try to get something to do."

"Why didn't you let us know of all this before?" inquired Evelyn, her heart stirred to its depths by the pathetic tale, and the woman's haggard and emaciated appearance.

"I did not want to trouble you unnecessarily, Miss Drayton. I know you are all very busy, and have enough cares of your own, without burdening yourselves with mine. As long as the money held out I decided not to make any complaints."

"As to your earning anything at present, Mrs. Bentley, I think it is totally out of the question. And as long as you have come to us, we are going to look after you, at least until your health is improved and—"

"You surely do not mean for us all to remain here, Miss Drayton?" interrupted the woman.

"Why, yes, of course—right here with us. We will be just like one family," answered Evelyn cheerily. "You have often told me what a strong constitution you had, and I feel sure that with a complete rest for a few weeks you will be greatly benefited, if not completely restored to health. And when you are able, why not try to obtain a position as Latin teacher in some private school? I know what a fine Latin scholar you are. Of course, it is a bad time of the year to secure such a position, but you could at least make the effort; frequently there are demands for substitutes."

At these words the poor woman burst into a flood of tears that shook her whole frame.

"I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your kindness!" she said as soon as she could get command of her voice. "But I do not think it would be right for me to remain with you longer than to-morrow, Miss Drayton. It would be imposing on good-nature to burden you with an addition of four to your household."

"Now please do not make any objections; let us do this for you, Mrs. Bentley. You are in truth a sick woman, and the only way that will enable you to look after your children is to regain your health. If you will give yourself up into our hands, and also do what you can to aid yourself by refraining as much as possible from all worry, I feel quite confident that together, we can bring

about a speedy recovery, and then you will be better able to plan for the future."

"I shall never forget you nor your family as long as I live!" sobbed the woman. "I realize that all you say is true—without strength I will not be able to do anything for either myself or the children, and I will help you by trying to help myself."

It was nearly midnight when they went to bed. All the way up the back stairway to the sewing-room on the third floor the procession quietly traveled. This room was gotten in readiness to accommodate Mrs. Bentley, the baby, and Harold. Elinore was awakened to come to Evelyn's assistance, and was indeed surprised to see a whole family in the sewing-room, which communicated with hers and Evelyn's.

There was, fortunately, a sofa-bed in the sewing-room that was plenty large enough to accommodate Mrs. Bentley and the baby. Harold was placed on an improvised bed made of chairs, and little Florence was taken in the room with Evelyn and Elinore, where a cosy bed was arranged for her on a couch.

The warm welcome of Evelyn, together with her kind and encouraging words, buoyed up the spirits of the broken-hearted woman as they had not been for years.

There was a soothing influence in the whole atmosphere of the minister's house, which she had always been conscious of, at Clover Hills. But to-night it was more pronounced than ever. To

the poor tired woman, it was like entering a peaceful valley, after being tossed about on some bleak and barren mountain. It was, indeed, an ideal place for a poor wanderer such as she to come and lay down her head, where kind hearts and hands opened wide to receive her.

"Home, home!" she sighed, as she closed her eyes. "This is truly a home. Oh, why am I so obstinate—why can't I put aside this foolish pride, and return like a prodigal to my own father's house? I know they will forgive me now, when they learn what I have suffered."

"Chile, chile! You'll kill yo'se'f wi' all dese 'sponsibilities!" whispered Betsy, shaking her head mournfully, when Evelyn hailed her on the stairway to give some instructions about breakfast.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Although the clergyman himself, with all his philanthropic tendencies, declared that it was beyond the pale of all reason to assume the extra cares and responsibilities of another family, yet the Bentleys stayed on. There was no other alternative than to make the best of things for the present.

In some respects, it proved for a time to be a godsend to Evelyn. Her interest and sympathy for the deserted and apparently friendless family were so deep, and so eager was she to assist them, that her secret heart-sorrow appeared to lose some of its keenness. There was so much to occupy her time and thoughts, that there were few opportunities to give full play to her reflections on that sad subject.

The baby proved to be a constant source of pleasure to them all. They took turns in looking after it, so that the mother was able to get as much rest as possible.

Evelyn lived in the hopes that under the circumstances Mrs. Bentley would perhaps consider that it was owing them, to open her heart and confide in them the secret of her past. But she was disappointed, the days glided by without even an intimation of anything concerning it.

Her name had already been left at several agencies, in the hopes of securing a position as soon

as her health improved. She was a very proud woman, and the thought of her dependence on this kind family, which she knew was not well off, gave her much uneasiness. Consequently, it was an incentive for her to make every effort to do what she could in coaxing back her lost health, and relieve them as soon as possible of the great burden they had insisted upon taking upon themselves.

The greatest anxiety in it all to Evelyn was, that she did not feel assured of her mother's and Betsy's being equal to the extra demands made upon them, and to go to the expense of hiring another maid, was just then entirely out of the question.

She also feared at first, as did her father and mother, that a reaction might in all probability take place, and Mrs. Bentley succumb to a long-continued illness of some kind. But fortunately this did not occur, although she appeared very weak and languid for some time, and had a great depression of spirits. However, the influence of those about her served as a constant stimulus. Their cheery words, sympathy, and watchfulness of her comfort, stimulated her to renewed efforts every day, in her eagerness to repay them by a speedy recovery.

She did have one set-back, that at first caused them much alarm, and all owing to a letter she received from her husband, which had been forwarded from Clover Hills. It stated in a most heartless manner that he never intended to return to her again, now that her money had all gone, and

that the best thing for her to do was to pack up and return to her parents. 'There was not one word about the children, not an inquiry after her health, not a line of regret for his actions and the misery he had brought upon her.

It was just at this time she received word from one of the agencies to call in regard to a position in a private school in one of the suburbs. But it was impossible for her to leave the house and be interviewed. This was a great disappointment to them all, but she rallied sooner than they expected, and went herself to the office in a few days, with the hopes of the position's being still open; and when she heard that it had just been filled the day before, she felt almost like giving up in despair.

Again the comforting words of the minister and his wife lifted her out of her despondency, and hope entered her heart once more. When Evelyn returned from school the next day, it was with the good news of a vacancy in the school where she taught.

"Our Latin teacher is obliged to leave and accompany an invalid sister to Colorado, in the hopes of prolonging her life," Evelyn informed Mrs. Bentley. "And you are to go with me to-morrow morning and be interviewed."

The tears of joy were coursing down poor Mrs. Bentley's cheeks as she faltered:

"Perhaps I may not, after all, be sufficiently competent to fill the position."

"From all that I can glean, I feel sure that you are," declared Evelyn.

"And I do too," spoke up the clergyman. "My little talk with you the other evening on the subject assures me of that."

The examination proved to be entirely satisfactory, and Mrs. Bentley started off with Evelyn the following Monday morning, with a heart lighter than it had been for years.

It was her idea, then, to take the children somewhere to board, where they could be looked after by someone during the hours she was employed. But by this time the Draytons had become so attached to them, that they would not listen to their going away. Then she insisted on handing over the entire salary to them if she remained. This also they refused.

"You forget, my dear child, that you must save for the summer," said the minister. "And all that is necessary for you to do at present is to pay the expenses of an extra maid. We look upon you now as one of us, and I want to do the same by you as if you were in truth my daughter. Our interest has so deepened in you, that we could not consent to have you leave us and go among strangers, and on the children's account especially, it would be a risky thing to do. By submitting to my plan, you will be able to save enough to tide over the summer months, during which time you could board with the children somewhere in the country."

For the moment Mrs. Bentley was too overcome to speak. The kindness and unselfishness of this family was an inspiration to her, awakening her

to a keener sense of all that was beautiful and lofty in human nature; and there burst from the very depths of her heart that day the silent prayer that she might herself be something like these good people.

Her spirits grew perceptibly brighter as the days flew by in her new occupation, and her health improved rapidly, even beyond their expectations.

She was home at three o'clock, and would then take her turn in looking after the children, or perhaps sew. Under Mrs. Drayton's supervision she learned much about the art of systematic house-keeping, and sewing. She marveled at her suggestions in fixing over the children's clothes. She saw how ignorant and careless she had been in her management of things in general, and how with economy, she might have been able to live without spending the principal of the money that had been left to her by her grandmother.

By the time warmer weather set in, Evelyn's health began to fail quite perceptibly. It seemed as though she had at last reached the limit of her endurance, notwithstanding her remarkable capacity for work. This languid feeling was becoming more pronounced every day, and she became aroused to the fact that it was a warning of a coming breakdown.

The very thought of a physical collapse, especially just at this time, was appalling to her; so she made every effort, took every precaution, to ward it off. There was great consolation in the thought

that it was nearing the end of the term, when all the family, except Elinore, expected to go back to Clover Hills and spend the summer. Several of the old church members had sent the family pressing invitations to make their home with them for July and August. But finally they made arrangements with one of the elders, for a very reasonable board, to spend the summer with him, as he had no children, and a house that was large, airy, and beautifully situated.

Elinore was to spend the summer with her friend Anna Morrison, whose father had rented a beautiful place for the season on the Massachusetts coast. She had been so closely tied down during the winter, and did so admirably, that Mr. and Mrs. Drayton gave their full consent to her accepting this invitation, which was looked upon as a great treat.

Mrs. Bentley could not be persuaded to go to Clover Hills, or near it. She declared that it would undo all the good done her, to come in contact so soon again, with scenes that would remind her so forcibly of the sorrowing years she had spent there. After a number of inquiries, the clergyman succeeded in obtaining a very nice place for them on a farm not many miles from Philadelphia.

It was a great comfort to Evelyn when all their plans were arranged for the summer so satisfactorily. Even Betsy rejoiced over the prospect of making a married daughter, who resided in the South, a long visit.

One beautiful afternoon in May a strong desire

seized Evelyn, as she left the school with Mrs. Bentley, to take a ride to the park.

"Go, by all means," urged Mrs. Bentley, when she mentioned it. "It will do you good, and I will inform them at home."

Since coming to Philadelphia it was an unheard of thing for her to have even a few minutes to herself. With the warm weather had come a longing, a homesickness for Clover Hills. Each day the desire had grown greater, to seek some quiet spot and give herself up to thought; and to-day the longing was so great that she felt she must give way to it.

She had tried to keep her parents ignorant of her real condition. But they detected that there was something wrong, and spoke to her about it, urging her to see a physician. She made every effort to allay their fears, and to convince them that it was nothing more serious than a little fatigue, which was perfectly natural after such a strenuous winter.

"And then, just think of it!" she would say, with her old-time brightness—"I will have the entire summer to recuperate, with practically nothing to do."

They shook their heads in doubt, however, when talking of it privately.

"I was afraid of this, my dear," the clergyman would say. "I was right—the responsibility was too much for her."

"Yes, I fear it has been," Mrs. Drayton would sigh. "But fortunately she has a strong constitu-

tion, and will pick up rapidly, I think, when we again get back to the country."

It was, indeed, a treat to Evelyn when she entered the park, having been shut up in the city the entire winter. She seated herself on a rustic bench not far from the river drive, and through the trees she could plainly see the endless array of carriages and automobiles. There were many strollers, too, who, like herself, no doubt, longed for some little relief from the noise of the city, and the sight of the trees and spring blossoms.

For some time she sat as though in a deep dream. Never in her whole life did she feel so sad, or experience such a feeling of loneliness. She regretted now that Whitfield had ever come into her life, so great was the change it had wrought in her.

"What I did this winter never would have affected me in this way," she mused. "And why can't I be just as happy as I was before?—especially when I know that he is engaged to another, and has forgotten by this time that such a person ever existed as Evelyn Drayton. The worst of it is I have no right to think of him as I do—it is sinful when he belongs to another. What a strange, indefinable thing love is!" she sighed, the tears filling her eyes. "It seems to be simply beyond one's power to control. And yet it is possible to live and even be happy without it. I feel quite sure of it. But so far, I have not reached that state of spiritual perfection to be able to bring into such perfect subjection, an earthly love like mine. I'm

afraid that after all, I cling very tenaciously to life—and am very much of the earth earthy.”

Several pedestrians, passing nearby, turned and looked at her, and Evelyn smiled through the tears.

“Dear me! how dejected and forlorn I must look!” thought she. “If I don’t brace up, some one will send a park guard to watch me, as one contemplating suicide.”

Presently she rose and sauntered off to a more secluded place, where the trees and shrubbery grew thicker. She spied a little water-fall trickling down over some small rocks, and she stood for several minutes and watched it.

There was something peculiarly peaceful and soothing about the place with its romantic surroundings. Not a sound save the splashing and gurgling of the water, mingled with an occasional chirp of a bird overhead. The air, too, was deliciously refreshing with odors of moist earth and bark.

She saw some violets nearby, and stooped to gather a bunch, the tears still glistening on her lashes. She lifted the dainty blossoms to her face; and while holding them there, she raised her eyes, and caught through the openings among the trees, glimpses of the sky across the river beyond, in all the gorgeous colorings of a brilliant sunset. For one brief moment her eyes became riveted upon it, as though the radiant clouds held some enchantment; when suddenly her hands dropped, and clasping them before her convulsively, with the violets

crushed between her palms, her heart burst into this silent prayer:

“My God, how wonderful is Thy love, and yet how slow we are in accepting it! And, after all, what is this need of mine, compared with the untold anguish of thousands of suffering souls, that I should thus far have failed to control it as it should be? When I consider Thy wondrous works, this beautiful earth, the heavens above, and the marvelous orb of light sinking from sight in the glow beyond,—what am I, that Thou shouldst be mindful of me? And yet I know that Thou art ever mindful of even the lowliest of creatures. How wonderfully Thou hast guided me through the past winter in all that I have undertaken! I have been rewarded at every step, beyond my greatest expectations. And now that just one thing has been denied me, how I have cried out again and again, like some petulant child who will not be comforted until its desire is granted. Give me this day, I pray Thee, the strength to control and bear this trial in a different spirit, so that I will be enabled to carry out to the end the duties I have undertaken. Give me the health and strength that will fit me for the needs of those I love, and who are now depending upon me. Take away every jealous and foolish thought from my heart, every longing that is not right for me to entertain, and teach me with my whole soul to say—‘Thou doest all things well!’ ”

A breeze sprang up as she stood there, and the

young leaves and branches began to stir, parting wider over her head in places, through which gleams of light shot and shone on the uplifted face, now radiant as with some newly discovered joy.

The rustling aroused her, and the deepening shadows reminded her of the time. She hastily brushed away some tears that still glistened on her lashes, and began to gather more violets until she had a large bunch; then started for the open pathway with a brisk step, and a heart lighter than it had been for a long time.

All the old-time energy and childlike joyousness appeared to be restored. Her spirits grew brighter with each step, as she hurried on. She was conscious of a sudden buoyancy, as of some great weight being lifted from her heart.

In days gone by it had been a frequent habit of hers to enter the house singing, but since coming to Philadelphia she had never heralded her coming in that way, until to-day, when she entered it, singing a simple little song she had often sung at Clover Hills, only she replaced "daisies" with "violets."

"Violets, violets, fresh with morning dew,
Please buy a bunch, miss, they were picked for you!"

With this, she entered the room where the whole family were assembled, and deposited the violets in her mother's lap.

It was like a sudden burst of sunshine—every face caught the reflection and lighted up instantly.

Even Baby Martin held out his hands toward her, and screamed with delight when she took him in her arms.

"You sweet child!" she cried, hugging and kissing him.

"Your little jaunt has brought the roses back to your cheeks. You must take them more frequently," said the minister, his eyes brightening at the picture she presented. "You are once again the Evelyn of Clover Hills. The Evelyn of Philadelphia is too serious and pale," laughed he.

"One can't be a child always, Father, you know! I think it's time I was growing a little more sedate. Then, too, how can one be a child of nature, penned up between brick and mortar in a noisy city? However, I don't regret coming to Philadelphia," she added, holding the baby over so that he could pull her father's grey locks. "It certainly has agreed with us all, and done wonders for you."

"Yes—for all except yourself!" returned her father.

"I don't even except myself," laughed Evelyn. "Because one is a little tired is no evidence of sickness. You will laugh, after a while, at all this unnecessary anxiety on my account. Just wait until you see me eat at Clover Hills!"

"Ouch!" shouted the minister, as the baby gathered a bunch of locks in each hand and gave a vigorous pull in a vise-like grip. This set them all to laughing, the children especially thinking it a great joke.

Evelyn untangled his fingers, and leaning over, playfully kissed her father on the head in the midst of the crumpled locks.

"Father," she said, "you look ten years younger."

And she was right. The minister was a new man; his eyes were brighter, his step more elastic, his face rounded out with a healthy glow. And best of all the throat trouble had almost entirely disappeared.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Mr. Barnes' house was a long, low, rambling structure of stone, situated on the outskirts of Clover Hills, just a short distance from the hotel Elberon. It stood on a rising slope of ground, commanding a beautiful view of the town and surrounding country. It was not a farm in the full sense of the word, although it had every appearance of one, with its barn, vegetable garden, orchard, and cows grazing in the nearby fields.

There were also corn and wheat fields directly surrounding the house, all of which, however, belonged to a farmer up the road, only the house, garden, and vegetable patch being owned by Mr. Barnes, who was President of the Bank at Clover Hills.

There was an atmosphere about the place that appealed to every one, both inside and out. The lawns were gay with plants and flowers. The broad piazzas, bordered with flower-boxes and shaded with olive-striped awnings, with an abundance of wicker chairs and grass rugs, made a most home-like and inviting picture.

At every window was a white mull curtain. The rooms were large, airy, and flooded with sunlight, and the floors, in summer, were covered with figured mattings, the colors of which harmonized with the furnishings of each room.

It was altogether an ideal place for a rest-cure, of which the Draytons were well aware.

They were welcomed most heartily by almost the entire town, hardly had they the trunks unpacked when they were besieged with callers. It was not long before the town gossip was poured into their ears, and the latest news given in detail. There was only one piece of news, however, that was of any special interest to Evelyn; and it was that the entire town was under the impression that John Burney, the young minister, had been paying her serious attention during the past winter, and the announcement of an engagement was being looked for any day.

They only laughed when Evelyn denied it, telling her that of course they knew it was not looked upon as a matter ready to give out to the public, but *they* had seen; and *they* knew what the minister's frequent visits to Philadelphia had been leading up to.

True, John Burney had made a number of short trips to Philadelphia since his installation. But it was to see Evelyn's father on matters connected with the church. The congregation, however, looked upon that as a mere excuse for his desire to see Evelyn.

It was also true that Evelyn had noticed at times, that he took a little more than ordinary interest in her. On several occasions he had intimated that a correspondence would give him great pleasure. But Evelyn did not take the hint. There was much

that she admired in John Burney, much that made their companionship a pleasure; still, she never dreamed of entertaining more than a deep friendly interest in him, and she had imagined that his interest in her was the same.

It was remarked by many in the town, that Sister Evelyn was not exactly the same. She was just as pleasant to every one as formerly, but looked pale and much thinner. She appeared also to wear a graver mien. Her beautiful eyes seemed to glow with a strange light, mingled with sadness, the interpretation of which could only be guessed at by a very keen observer; in fact, only by one who possessed the rare gift of a crystal insight into that intricate piece of machinery, the human heart.

To such a one only, it would indicate both suffering and the triumph over it. A crushing blow of some kind, perhaps, that had left a scar, but from which the soul had risen victorious. To the people of Clover Hills, however, it signified only the natural sobering down of a young girl in love.

When Evelyn learned that the Whitfields were not occupying their place in Clover Hills, she concluded that in all probability the entire family was abroad.

On passing their house one day, she noted that it was open, and that servants were evidently getting it in readiness for occupants. The next morning she read in the town paper, that the Whitfields were expected in Clover Hills that day; that their son was ill, and had been spending several weeks with

his parents at a seaside resort, which did not appear to agree with him, and at his request they were bringing him to Clover Hills.

A stifled cry of anguish broke from Evelyn at this news. Her eyes filled with tears, so that she could not for a minute go on with the article. She thought she had conquered this love, but the sudden news of his illness affected her deeply, and she realized that, although she had secured the strength to control it, the love was still alive, and would live as long as she did.

She was soon herself again, and wiping away the tears she read on. "It has been rumored that his engagement will be announced in the fall, the fortunate young lady being a Miss Alexander, a fascinating Southern belle." But this was no news to Evelyn; it only confirmed the reports she had heard off and on for some months past.

She had planned to keep out of doors as much as possible. She took tramps with the boys and Dorothy; rowed, played tennis, accepted invitations to numerous little social affairs, knowing that it was for her good to keep her mind diverted as much as possible, although she preferred, nowadays, to seek seclusion.

One afternoon she strolled off alone, and seated herself near the creek with a little book she had carried with her. She was very intent on its pages, when she was startled by a noise back of her, and on turning, she saw the young minister emerging from a clump of trees and bushes.

"Oh, Mr. Burney!" she ejaculated, with a start. "How you frightened me!"

"Ditto," laughed he, stepping forward with outstretched hand. "It is so seldom that I see any one in this isolated spot, I thought at first I beheld a vision."

"This then is your sanctum-sanctorum, and I am intruding," said Evelyn.

"Might I not say the same, Miss Drayton?" he queried. "For evidently you have sought your favorite haunt for a quiet time with your book. No doubt this has been your sanctum-sanctorum for years before I ever saw Clover Hills, and consequently *I* am the intruder."

Evelyn laughed.

"I have a number of favorite nooks along the creek. I hardly know which of them I prefer," said she, as the minister seated himself beside her on the bench.

"To tell the truth, Miss Drayton, as a rule I am not very fond of seclusion—only when studying my sermons. I'm sure I don't possess the instincts of the recluse. But, of course, there are times, I think, when one longs for solitude."

Evelyn looked across the water.

"It's the same with me, Mr. Burney; I could never be a recluse in the strict sense of the word. I love to mingle with people, and enter into the activities of life. But when it comes to being deprived entirely of all opportunities for even an occasional communion with one's self, then it is

that I rebel. That has been my experience for a year past. Indeed," she continued jocundly—"I was getting desperate, Mr. Burney, for a little relaxation. My whole nature seemed to cry out for a halt, and I realized that I must heed the warning, or something would snap, I didn't know what," laughed she. "Yes, that was the actual state of affairs with me this spring, and a new experience, I assure you. However, here I am at last, enjoying to its fullest extent the rest for which I have so longed. I am leading the quietest kind of a life, and it is astonishing what I have gained in this short time."

"I noticed in the winter that you did not look well," said John Burney, "and I wondered then if you were not over-taxing yourself—especially when you took under your wings a whole family from the street."

"Oh, no!" laughed Evelyn. "That had nothing to do with it—" a deep glow suddenly spreading over her face. "It was merely a combination of circumstances. You know how it is at times—you become so penned in, that to fight your way out is no easy matter, and if you do succeed in extricating yourself, it is not without more or less bumps and bruises, which require very careful nursing afterwards. So you see that is what I am doing this summer—dressing my wounds with nature's healing arts."

"I most thoroughly approve of your remedy, Miss Drayton," said he, mystified as to the cause of

her blushes. "And I do hope that your improvement will continue until you are fully restored to your former good health. May I ask what book you are reading?"

Evelyn handed it to him.

"'Character and Heroism,' by Emerson," he read aloud. "A very interesting little selection of Emerson's thoughts."

"I happened to pick it up this morning, and became very much interested in it, so brought it along with me this afternoon," said she.

"What is there about it that so attracts you?" asked he.

"Oh, a great deal," spoke up Evelyn, a sudden brightness coming into her eyes. "Just before you came, I was reading what he said about great men. The largest part of the power of great men is latent, he says, and it is this that denotes character, a reserve force which acts directly by presence, and without means. Just a minute, please—" reaching for the book.

She turned to the first page and read aloud:

"'I have read that those who listened to Lord Chatham felt that there was something finer in the man than anything which he said.'"

Evelyn looked up.

"Have you not found this the case in your study of character?" she asked. "A magnetic, indefinable power in some, which their very presence seems to exert, though they may never speak a word."

The young minister raised his eyebrows and riv-

eted his large hazel eyes upon her, as Evelyn looked off dreamily into space.

"I have," returned he. "And I have also discovered that a man may be learned, talented, and even a fluent speaker all combined, and yet not be a man of character. And it is all owing to the fact, I believe, that they do not possess the stalwart principles that denote strength."

"Yes," said Evelyn earnestly, turning to the book again. "Here is an explanation of that very thing, given by an example that Emerson draws in the selection of a candidate for Congress. Listen:

"The people know that they need in their representative much more than talent—namely, the power to make his talent trusted. They cannot come at their ends by sending to Congress a learned, acute, and fluent speaker, if he be not one who, before he was appointed by the people to represent them, was appointed by Almighty God to stand for fact, invincibly persuaded of that fact in himself, so that the most confident and the most violent persons learn that here is resistance on which both impudence and terror are wasted—namely, faith in a fact."

"Then, again," she went on, turning over another page, while the minister watched her with curiosity, wondering at her unusual interest in such a subject.

"The same motive force appears in trade. There are geniuses in trade as well as in war, or state, or letters, and the reason why this or that man is

fortunate, is not told. It lies in the man; that is all anybody can tell about it. See him, and you will know as easily why he succeeds, as if you saw Napoleon; you would comprehend his fortune.' ”

When she finished this, Evelyn lowered the book, and gazed into space again in deep reflection.

The character of Whitfield was before her all the time; in fact, there was, in the first place, so much in the book that reminded her of him, that it had so attracted her, and continued to hold her interest.

“Yes,” she mused. “I have always felt that in Frank Whitfield lay a wonderful latent force, an indefinable something that denoted strength—the power to succeed.”

“Evidently character study is a very interesting one to you,” said John Burney, breaking the silence.

“It is,” reflectively— “and at times I have been greatly puzzled,” she sighed, the flush deepening in her cheeks.

John Burney coughed. A sudden thought flashed through his mind that there might be something personal in all this, and his interest deepened in all that she said.

“Yes,” said he. “Some characters always remain perfect enigmas.”

“A strong character is a wonderful thing,” Evelyn went on musingly. “You know Napoleon once said, that what the world was in greatest need of was a man.”

“Napoleon knew only too well what an influence a strong character exerts,” said the minister,

“for higher natures must always influence the lower ones.”

“Have you noticed that strong characters are rarely very talkative?” asked she, the color spreading again over her cheeks.

“I have,” answered he, with alertness, for he was not a very talkative man.

He took up the book from the bench, where it lay between them, and after glancing over several pages he read aloud:

“‘Men that feel the most, say the least, and a few words spoken by such, carry more weight than a thousand spoken by another, who has not the same strength and power back of them.’”

Evelyn gave a little start. She clasped her hands firmly, and riveted her eyes upon the ground.

“That explains it—I see it all now!” thought she. “Men that feel the most, say the least. In not answering my letter, he was not after all wanting in politeness. It undoubtedly appeared more indelicate to him to write and inform me that the correspondence must cease, than to leave it to my judgment in appreciating the situation, when I learned of his attentions to Miss Alexander.”

She forgot all about John Burney for the minute, in the pleasure this new reason gave her of Whitfield’s apparent rudeness, for it had always been an unpleasant thought, to think of his being remiss in the natural courtesies of the gentleman.

In the meantime, John Burney was nonchalantly turning the pages of the book, as though searching

for something else on that particular subject. But in reality his thoughts were on the young girl at his side, turning his eyes upon her every now and then, and thinking that she was the greatest character puzzle he had ever come in contact with.

"This subject, no doubt, has been of great interest to you, Miss Drayton," said he finally, intruding upon her reveries, an amused smile spreading over his face at her deep absorption.

"Oh, I beg your pardon for being so preoccupied!" she stammered with confusion, her face now turning crimson with a sudden rush of blood, that made even her temples throb for an instant. "While you were reading, a minute ago, I seemed to see the solution of a problem in connection with a recent character study—" thinking she must make some sort of an explanation.

There was a slight flush in the minister's cheeks also, now, as he thought:

"Whose character could it have been but mine, to have blushed so when I spoke?"

He moved up just a little nearer, and cleared his throat.

"Do you mean that you have suddenly gotten an insight into a character, which has heretofore been impenetrable?" asked he.

"Well, no, not exactly," answered Evelyn. "It was just a little act of a friend of mine, that I did not quite understand, but which after all may have been actuated by a motive of which I had not thought before, making it entirely excusable."

"Oh," said John Burney, his own eyes becoming fixed on the ground. It was his turn for a reverie. He tried to recall every act of his, even the most trivial, which might possibly have been misconstrued by her. Presently he picked up the book again, cleared his throat, and began to read aloud to hide his embarrassment.

"The reason why we feel one man's presence and do not feel another's, is as simple as gravity.'"

Evelyn became alert at this.

"Truth is the summit of being; Justice is the application of it to affairs. All individual natures stand in scales, according to the purity of this element in them. The will of the pure runs down from them into other natures, as water runs down from a higher into a lower vessel. This natural force is no more to be withstood than any other natural force.'"

He paused.

"And haven't you experienced this when coming in contact with certain people?" Evelyn spoke up enthusiastically, her eyes shining with that strange light, again, which puzzled John Burney.

"I have," answered he, with emphasis, lowering the book and turning his eyes full upon her. But Evelyn was looking the other way, and not at all conscious of what his words, and the look in his eyes, really indicated.

"Isn't it a wonderful thing, this magnetic force in some natures?" said she, with a sigh, looking off into space again with a dreamy intensity, as though communing more with herself. "How they

are born to draw others toward them, whether they desire it or no."

John Burney looked puzzled.

"Perhaps, even before you know them," she went on with a little quaver in her voice, "you will be conscious of this, and most wonderful of all must be the influence of those who inspire love—"

Something seemed to tighten around her throat, and caused a little catch in her voice, so that the word "love" was almost inarticulate. The young minister noticed it, and continued to wonder.

"Yes, and strangest of all, we cannot often give a reason why we do love," said he demurely.

"I have often thought about that, Mr. Burney. But there must be a certain magnetic force somewhere, that penetrates deep into the affections. A wonderfully mysterious thing is love.—Speaking about influence," she spoke up quickly, purposely changing the subject as she felt her emotion rising to a dangerous point—"I do not believe we realize how much that word covers; how every one of us is continually being influenced, and influencing others, either for good or bad. Do you know, Mr. Burney, I am having more and more consideration for humanity every day; more toleration for the weak and erring. When you think of the vast number of wretched souls who have never had even a chance to better themselves, starting life, from their very birth, in an atmosphere that is loathsome, never coming in contact with any good and ennobling influences, seeing only what is coarse, vulgar, and

vicious, what is it that can rescue such, short of a miracle; and even in the higher walks of life there are conditions where nothing is seen or heard that is inspiring, or that will tend to awaken the spiritual nature. It reminds me of this verse I saw sometime ago, and committed it to memory:

"If we could feel for them that have not won,
In life's great inner conflict, all the pain,
The deep, unutterable, ceaseless pain
Of life's defeat; the emptiness, the woe
Of looking back on life mis-spent and fled,
Perhaps our sympathy would quench our scorn."

There was a pause.

John Burney waited to hear her say more. It was unusual, as well as inspiring, for a young woman to talk as she did. It was always a delight to him when Evelyn expressed her views, and he sat in silent admiration.

Particularly interesting was she to him this afternoon. There was a sweet sadness about her, that was so unlike the Evelyn Drayton he knew the summer previous when they first met. And those blushes—what did they mean? Could it be possible that she was in love with him? It set him to thinking.

"Yes," he said absently, breaking the silence, "we don't realize what the power of influence is, and what we might do for good if we only exerted it in the right way."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Evelyn, jumping to her feet. "I must be going—I did not think of the

time. See the position of the sun; it must be about quarter past five."

"A very good guess," said the young minister, looking at his watch. "Just five minutes out of the way. But do not go—it is delightful here now, the best part of the day—"

"I should like very much to remain longer, I assure you, Mr. Burney, but tea is served at six o'clock at Mr. Barnes's, and I have quite a distance to go."

They started off together, and when they reached the road, met a number of people they knew; but they did not stop to talk, only bowed as they passed them. It amused Evelyn to see them winking knowingly at one another, and whispering in exultation before they were hardly out of hearing.

"They will think things are certainly progressing now!" thought she, wondering whether the rumor had reached his ears, of the prevailing opinion regarding them both.

John Burney had frequently been reminded that as soon as he married he could occupy the parsonage, which had been rented, since it was vacated by the Draytons. Yes, and he also knew the heart's desire of the people. But, as yet, he had not turned his thoughts seriously to any particular young lady. He had, however, for some time past been conscious of a more than ordinary interest developing in Evelyn Drayton, which deepened considerably that afternoon, as he endeavored to interpret her mysterious actions.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

It had been a very warm day, but toward the latter part of the afternoon the wind changed, clearing the atmosphere of a depressing humidity. There was a freshness in the breeze that was blowing, and Evelyn drew in long breaths of it as she left the house, and wended her way toward the creek for a quiet hour with a book.

Since the day she met John Burney she had avoided a stroll in that direction, but to-day she longed to be alone in one of her favorite haunts, if only for a short time, so decided to run the risk of meeting him.

She had not gone far when she met Miss Barker, a well-known character in the town, whose name was a most appropriate one, for she was the leading gossip of Clover Hills. She was tall, thin, and wiry, with a body as active as her tongue. She was likely to be seen anywhere and at any time. Hardly a funeral or a wedding took place that she did not manage to be present; not an accident occurred, a visitor arrive in the town, or even a family quarrel take place, that she couldn't tell you all about.

"Well, well! Now isn't this a piece of luck! How fortunate I am," she exclaimed, shaking Evelyn's hand until it ached. "I was just on my way to see your father, Sister Evelyn, but as I

have several other errands, perhaps you will be so kind as to carry my message."

"I shall be very glad to," returned Evelyn.

"Thank you. Ask him, please, if he would object to calling at the Canfield's as soon as it is convenient; they're in a heap of trouble. Mrs. Canfield is in poor health, you know, and now her son Bill is down with a low fever of some kind, and John, the one fourteen, fell down a hatchway and broke his leg. I saw the ambulance go by our house and ran after it, and lo, and behold, it stopped at Canfield's. I went in, of course, to see if I could be of any help, for it was John they had brought home in it. Land sakes, if Mrs. Canfield didn't cry something pitiful! She told me how she missed your father in times of trouble, he was always so comforting and kind. She says the young minister is all well and good, but he doesn't ease her heart as your father did. Besides, he can't go to her now, anyway, as I suppose you know, being telegraphed for to come right home or he might not see his mother before she died. She must have some one right hasty, you see, to attend to her spiritual needs, and so I just took the responsibility on my own shoulders to go for your father—that is, mind you, if you think he won't object to going, beings as he is not the minister any more."

"He will be very glad to do what he can for Mrs. Canfield, I feel quite sure," said Evelyn. "I will tell him about it as soon as I return this eve-

ning. I'm surprised to hear of Mr. Burney's sudden leave-taking."

"You are!" cried the woman. "Now, Sister Evelyn, don't try to fool me in that style. I know, it's hardly got around yet. I think I was about the first to know about it, as well as the news about Mrs. Gandy. I don't suppose you've heard that she ain't expected to live the day out. Two doctors have been with her since yesterday morning."

"I am very sorry to hear it. I know that she was ill, but had not heard of her being critically so," said Evelyn, wondering how long this was to keep up, and making no attempt to argue the matter with her concerning her intimations in regard to herself and the minister.

"Oh, my, yes! Then, too, there is trouble among the swells on the other side of the town," she rattled on. "I just heard that young Whitfield had a relapse and is considered to be in a very dangerous way. They had two specialists with him from New York last night."

"Is that so!" exclaimed Evelyn, with a little start, her heart beginning to thump violently.

"Yes, it's too bad, and when they thought he was getting along so nicely to. But it's nothing but trials and tribulations in this world, Sister Evelyn. You've always been one of the happy sort, though, whom worries don't seem to bother. Still, you're young yet, so be happy while you can. Trials come soon enough. But I must be off. I want to see Miss Riggs before she leaves for New

York. She is going to do a lot of shopping for Lauretta Ross's wedding outfit. They selected her because she has such good taste. Good-by, I hope your father won't mind going to the Canfield's."

Evelyn nodded and smiled, but hardly knew what the woman was talking about. She hurried on in her excitement, paying no attention whatever to the direction she was taking. On, on, with her eyes straight ahead, as though some influence was drawing her with an irresistible force. Corner after corner she turned, until she left the town behind her and finally entered beautiful Maplewood Drive, but she continued on without slackening her pace for an instant, until suddenly in the distance there loomed up before her the familiar roof and chimneys of Whitfield's home, and she stopped short, and stood staring at it as though transfixed.

Suddenly her nerves relaxed, and her eyes grew dim with tears.

"What am I doing!" she thought. "I must be losing my head. Oh, if he were only not ill!"

A sob escaped her as her eyes lingered tenderly in one long farewell look toward the beautiful villa, where lay the object of her great love, dying, perhaps, without as much as one word to her.

She was just about to turn and retrace her steps when she noticed a woman leave the house and walk down toward the gate.

"Miss Alexander, perhaps," thought she. "How I should like to get a glimpse of her. I think I

shall walk on and pass her if she comes in this direction."

But as the woman cleared the trees and foliage and stepped out in plainer view, Evelyn saw her mistake; it was Mrs. Whitfield, whom she had often seen but never met.

She was a semi-invalid, and never took any part in the social affairs of the town, and being an Episcopalian, she of course attended the church of that denomination, when her health permitted. So it had just happened that no opportunity had presented itself to meet the elder Whitfields since their coming to Clover Hills.

Evelyn would have preferred turning back now, but she had already started toward the woman, who evidently had noticed her, and there was no alternative but to keep right on and take a more round-about route toward home.

As they drew nearer, Evelyn saw that she appeared to be very much agitated; and when they were within a few yards of each other, she gave a start, and the next instant her hands were outstretched toward Evelyn.

"Oh, Miss Drayton, is it really you?" cried she. "The very one I want to see—how glad I am!"

Evelyn took the trembling hands in her own and pressed them firmly, as she faltered:

"What can I do for you, Mrs. Whitfield?"

"It is about my son I desire to consult you. I suppose you know that he is very ill."

Evelyn nodded.

"I am sorry to say he has had a relapse since coming to Clover Hills, and for several days past he has repeatedly asked for you."

While she talked the woman's voice grew husky with emotion. She paused, and freeing her hand, she wiped away the tears. Evelyn's own eyes filled up also; it was impossible to keep them back, or to hide them from Mrs. Whitfield.

"I regret very much to burden you with my sorrow, Miss Drayton," she said tremulously. "But my son appears to be so anxious to see you that we decided to-day to send for you. I was just on my way to Miss Evans's, just above here, to ask the name of the people with whom you are staying. I knew that she attended your father's church, and very likely, would be able to give me the information I desired."

"If I can be of any assistance at all, I shall be only too glad to grant your request," said Evelyn, struggling hard for composure. "But are you sure that there is no mistake, and that your son really does desire to see me?"

"There can be no doubt of it whatever, Miss Drayton, I assure you. If it was only in his delirium that he made the request, it would be a different matter, but in his most rational moments he has asked for you."

It all appeared so improbable to Evelyn, that she still felt, there must be a misunderstanding somewhere. She was perplexed, embarrassed, and yet could not refuse to comply.

"You and Frank have been very good friends, have you not?" asked Mrs. Whitfield.

"We have," returned Evelyn.

"I imagined so, from many things he has said. And you have had a number of little talks on religious subjects, have you not?"

"We have," answered Evelyn.

"He must have been deeply interested in those talks, Miss Drayton, because he has spoken of them frequently of late, and also of a talk you gave in your father's pulpit one Sunday evening. 'Let us go on unto perfection'—was not that the text?"

Evelyn nodded. A light was dawning upon her. She thought she grasped the situation now.

"You have concluded, then, I suppose, that your son desires to see me in regard to these matters," she said, getting more command of herself.

"I do. I think he is under the impression that you may be a great source of help and comfort to him in a spiritual way; in fact, I feel quite sure of it, Miss Drayton. And you will come then, won't you?"—pleadingly, the tears filling her eyes again.

"I will do what I can, certainly," replied Evelyn, swallowing a lump in her throat, that seemed impossible to get rid of.

She longed to ask more about his illness, but did not want to appear too inquisitive.

"He seems to be at his best toward evening, and if you will be at the house in the neighborhood of seven o'clock, we will arrange so that you can see him at that time," said Mrs. Whitfield. "I can-

not tell you how grateful I am to you, my dear—how grateful, in fact, the whole family will be. We feel that we want to do everything we can in carrying out his wishes. It has been most discouraging—he was improving right along, when toward spring he succumbed to this peculiar fever. There were quite a number of cases of it at Edinburgh, and, I suppose, not being in a first-class condition, he was susceptible to anything that came along, and it took a deep hold on him. He rallied, and was, as we thought, convalescing, when suddenly his temperature went up again on arriving here.”

In another moment they had separated, and Evelyn, trembling with agitation, hurried back to the house, which she found deserted, except for the servants.

She went direct to her room and bolted the door, through which we will not try to penetrate, as she battled with this new struggle. But when she appeared again, there was no indication of it in her face, and when she descended the stairs to join the family, on their return from a drive, she was able to talk without any evidence of the agitation, the thought of the coming ordeal had caused her.

She related to them all about her interview with Mrs. Whitfield; and when she left the house a little later, to enter the carriage the Whitfields had kindly sent for her, she still appeared surprisingly calm and self-possessed.

Her father stepped to the carriage with her, and assisted her in. He leaned over for a minute, as she raised her face for a good-by kiss, and whispered this prayer :

“The Lord be with thee and strengthen thee, my child, and cause His face to shine upon thee, and give thee the words to speak that will bring peace and joy to this young man, stricken as he is in all the vigor of his young manhood. If it be Thy will, O Lord, spare his life, that the talents Thou hast given him may be used for the good of mankind in the vocation that he has chosen.”

When the carriage started off, Evelyn's eyes were full of tears. And the clergymen stood with clasped hands, looking after it, with his own eyes dim, and a heart overflowing with love for his eldest born.

CHAPTER XXIX.

When Evelyn arrived at "Idlewild," she found Mrs. Whitfield standing at the open door, waiting to receive her. She noticed that her spirits were brighter than when she left her a short time previous, owing to the fact, as Evelyn afterward learned, that her son's condition had improved quite perceptibly.

"He is dozing just at present, so come with me to the library in the meantime, and allow me to introduce you to the rest of the family," she said, leading the way.

She looked very frail, but to Evelyn appeared to be buoyed up with a nervous energy, and in some respects she reminded her of Frank.

A portly, elderly gentleman rose to meet them, grave, but with a distinguished air, and whom Evelyn recognized immediately as Mr. Whitfield.

"It was very kind of you to come, Miss Drayton," he said, pressing her hand warmly.

There were two ladies seated at the open window at the far end of the room, the younger of whom Evelyn decided on the spot was Miss Alexander. She was young, beautiful, and very elegantly, as well as most becomingly attired. They rose and came forward, as Mrs. Whitfield said:

"Allow me, Miss Drayton, to introduce you to

my sister, Mrs. Harrison, and my neice, Miss Hayes."

It almost provoked a smile from Evelyn, the manner in which she was jumping at conclusions in all things regarding Whitfield and this much talked-of Miss Alexander.

For some little time they sat conversing. Evelyn learned all about Whitfield's illness. How the doctors had agreed that it never would have taken such a serious turn with him, had he been in the best of health. How he had taken up a course of study at Edinburgh, declaring that he must have his mind occupied to some extent, and was confident of being perfectly equal to it, although the physicians were of the opinion that he could not have been, and should have allowed his mind to rest for the winter.

"We tried to persuade him to go to Nice with us, but he said it was impossible to live the winter as he had the summer," said Mrs. Whitfield.

"Yes, he appeared to be in a desperate way when we joined him early in the fall," said Mr. Whitfield. "You see, Miss Drayton, my son is very ambitious, and has an unusually active brain, which, it seems, must be employed."

During all this conversation, Evelyn felt as though her real self had become suspended, and she was moving in a sort of dream, a new personality that seemed to act altogether independently of the other. She marveled herself at her composure; no one could possibly have guessed that

she was in love with the patient in the room above, as she sat calmly discussing him with others.

There existed a strange fascination in all that surrounded her. The house, its furnishings, the parents, the aunt, and niece, each holding a separate attraction which she could not understand—even the trees, the flowers, and sloping lawns that caught her eye whenever she turned toward the window, appeared to hold a charm that made them unlike any others she had ever seen. It was because they all spoke of him, and were a part of him. His very presence, in fact, seemed to pervade the atmosphere of the whole place.

The conversation was finally interrupted by the appearance of a nurse in the doorway. Mrs. Whitfield stepped over to her, and after a few words she introduced Evelyn, and the two started off together.

"I have been waiting for Mr. Whitfield to awaken, Miss Drayton; he has been sleeping for some time. And a very natural sleep it appears to be, so different from the stupors he has been having for a week past."

"I am very glad," said Evelyn. "Perhaps, under the circumstances, it would be advisable to postpone my visit; it might agitate him, and so dissipate the good effects he may derive from such a sleep."

"Oh, no, not at all," replied the nurse, as they quietly mounted the broad stairway. "I have no such fears whatever. I think a visit from you

would be beneficial under any circumstances, because he is so anxious to see you."

Evelyn's face flushed at this, and she gave a queer little cough.

"Just wait here one minute," said the nurse, as they reached the room that communicated with the sick chamber. "I thought he was rousing up, but he may have fallen off to sleep again."

She returned almost immediately.

"Yes, he has gone off again. But you might go in, at any rate, and sit by the bed. I have placed a chair there for you."

"Don't you think I had better wait until he is awake and prepared for a visitor?" ventured Evelyn.

"No, I think in this case a little surprise might prove very beneficial, and I will tell you why," the nurse returned, lowering her voice, and motioning to Evelyn to follow her as she moved toward the hall.

"Miss Drayton," she began, when she knew they were beyond hearing—"this morning I heard him say, 'Oh, if I could awaken sometime and see Evelyn beside me!' I walked over to the bed, and he looked dazed, then smiled as he asked, 'Did I speak?' 'You have been dreaming, I suppose, Mr. Whitfield,' I said. 'Yes, dreaming, and a beautiful dream it was, too!' he whispered. You know he is too weak to speak above a whisper. Now I was just thinking about all this a little while ago, and decided to have you come up and give him this surprise if he continued to sleep."

Evelyn's heart beat a trifle quicker at this, but she still remained perfectly calm, though it seemed at the moment she could not speak—she only nodded and smiled as the nurse talked.

"Of course, I rely on your good judgment, Miss Drayton, to adapt yourself to the situation, as, after all, this is only an experiment," she cautioned, as they entered the room again.

Evelyn nodded in acquiescence, and at a motion from the nurse, she walked toward the sick-room with her heart lifted up in silent prayer for continued strength. There was something exquisitely chaste and simple in her bearing and appearance, dressed in white, with no color except a pale pink girdle of soft silk, reminding one of some sweet fragrant wood blossom.

One sweeping glance she gave toward the bed. A shudder thrilled through her frame at the sight of the wasted form, and her chest heaved in one deep sigh; then it was all over—she had complete control of herself by the time she reached the chair.

He was lying quite still, his eyes closed, and to all appearances sleeping soundly. Her light step had not aroused him, and she was glad, after all, that she had found him thus. It gave her time to recuperate from the shock his changed appearance had given her.

She seated herself very cautiously, that she might not make any noise, and gazed alternately at the white face near her, then out through a window directly opposite the bed, preparing herself

for the next ordeal that might happen at any minute. Once she leaned slightly over the bed, clasped her hands on the white coverlet, and closing her eyes, she offered another appeal for strength.

Just then Whitfield opened his eyes, and instantly he saw her. His eyelids blinked, and his nerves quivered with excitement.

"It cannot be!" he thought, opening his eyes wider. "And yet it is so like her! I know only one person to whom that face could possibly belong. Can it be a dream?" he wondered. "I have had so many such! And she is sleeping—how strange!"

While he stared, his mind became clearer; his numbed senses awakened, and he finally felt convinced that it was a reality.

At that instant Evelyn opened her eyes and met his gaze full upon her.

For a few brief seconds there was not a word, not a sound; then his hand moved as though to hold it out toward her in greeting. Evelyn saw the movement, and gently closed her hand around it.

"Is it you, Evelyn?" he whispered faintly.

"It is, and I have come to stay awhile with you, if you don't mind," she answered, smiling back at him.

She had never heard him call her Evelyn before.

"I am so glad—it was very kind of you to come," said he. His face was very white, but his eyes appeared to shine with a steady light.

"What a refreshing sleep you have had!" continued Evelyn cheerfully. "A few more like that will soon place you on your feet again."

A thrill passed through his body at this, and his thin fingers trembled against hers. He shook his head as though in doubt of her words.

"And what is life?" he whispered absently—"Only a vapor that appeareth for a little time, then vanishes away."

"Yes, our own short earthly life, it is true," said Evelyn quietly, "but 'In the way of the righteous is life everlasting.'"

"What is it our Master said to him that overcometh?" asked the sick man, his memory failing him.

"'I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne,' " answered Evelyn.

"And I have overcome, Evelyn!" he spoke up exultantly, the light in his eyes growing brighter.

How Evelyn's heart leaped at those words! The revelation gave her an unspeakable joy. Her earthly love for the moment was forgotten entirely in the great happiness this news gave her; and yet she sat calmly through it all, with no outward sign of her real feelings.

"I am very glad!" she said, burying her other hand under the wasted one, so that it lay between her two palms.

There was silence for a minute after this. A hazy, far-away look came into the patient's eyes.

"Be strong and of good courage!" said Evelyn,

in a voice sweet and low, but quite distinct. "Fear not, nor be afraid, for the Lord thy God, He it is that doth go with thee. He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee; the Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest."

The eyes of the sick man became riveted again on the face bending over him, and Evelyn met his gaze for an instant, then dropped her eyes under it, and for a brief period it seemed as though the two souls had come together in some higher sphere, their spirits united, even though their lives were not to be in this world. Then she raised her eyes again to his, and continued:

"The Lord is my rock and my fortress, in Him will I trust. He is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, and my refuge, my Saviour. Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise Him."

Again his eyes grew brighter, and lighted up his whole face during the silence that followed; when suddenly the lids drooped, and they closed with a sigh, as a tired child frequently gives when falling off to sleep.

Evelyn sat as though turned to stone, afraid almost to breathe for fear of rousing him.

"Perhaps after all it has been too much for him," she thought—"he is very weak. But if this is a natural sleep, it may be beneficial, and enable him to recuperate from any bad effects my sudden presence may have caused."

The nurse stepped to the door and took the sit-

uation in at a glance. She nodded toward Evelyn, and quietly slipped back into the room again.

The sun was just sinking, and its last rays shone through the windows, filling the room with a mellow light. The curtains began to flutter in the light breeze that sprang up with the dying day, carrying with it to the sick-room delicious odors of new-mown hay. There was not a sound save the occasional chirp of a bird, and a gentle soothing rustling of the leaves on a grand old oak tree, some branches of which came in close proximity to the window opposite the bed.

CHAPTER XXX.

Every day, at the same hour for two weeks the carriage was sent from "Idlewild" for Evelyn. These visits were soon discovered, and became a part of the town gossip. But Miss Barker was the one who explained it all.

"I got it from a very good source," she would say, "that Frank Whitfield was very much affected by that little sermon of Sister Evelyn's last summer, and even went to see her about it. Some say that it ended in an out-and-out conversion, and that's the reason he longed to have her with him in this sickness. You know there couldn't be any other, for he is secretly engaged to that Southern beauty, or trying to keep it a secret, and we all know Sister Evelyn's love affair."

From the day that Evelyn made her first visit to "Idlewild" Whitfield steadily improved. Whether the improvement was wholly attributable to these visits or not, no one could positively say; the family declared, however, that it was at least due in part to them.

At the end of the two weeks, Evelyn thought it advisable to cut down her visits to every other day, and persuaded them not to send the carriage for her, as she preferred walking.

Even the Whitfields were under the impression that their son had at last found his affinity in the

Southern belle, of whom they had heard so much, even though things had evidently not yet reached a climax. He had brought home with him a beautiful picture of her on ivory, which stood on a table in his room. He had spoken of her frequently to his parents. But when they intimated that they supposed they must look upon her as their future daughter-in-law, Whitfield would only laugh, and say teasingly: "Well, you never can tell. I could fall in love with one much less attractive, and who would not stand nearly so many chances as she, of meeting with your approval."

His spirits took a drop, the day he learned that Evelyn's visits would no longer be daily ones, but he said nothing. He knew that under the circumstances, he could expect nothing else. As he grew stronger, he began to realize how indelicate it had been to send for her, and he wondered that she had consented to come. But he would comfort himself with the thought that she, of course, understood that it was all owing to old friendship's sake, and the little talks, which had developed a peculiar sympathy between them.

He remarked one day, how sorry he had been that the correspondence had to come to such an abrupt ending, especially when it was just at a time when he most needed her advice.

"Yes," said Evelyn, turning her face from him and gazing out the window—"I was sorry also; however, in the end we must all work out our salvation alone."

"Of course, Miss Drayton," he returned sadly, "nevertheless, I missed the little talks, which were a greater help to me than you imagine."

He gave a little cough, to clear his throat.

Evelyn turned anxiously. "I hope you are not overtaxing yourself," said she.

"Oh, no!" he laughed, fearing she would cut her visit short. "I feel stronger to-day than I have for months. I was going to say that I fully appreciated the situation. Under the circumstances to continue the correspondence would have been entirely out of place. Besides, some people, you know, are very jealous—" with a sidelong glance and a twinkle, making the experiment for the first time of a little playful teasing.

The remark, however, was, of course, entirely misconstrued by Evelyn.

"Certainly, I understand," she returned. "One must be very cautious—" turning her eyes toward the window again, and thinking of the insane jealousy of both Adele and Marie, and wondered if Miss Alexander could possibly be classed with such in that respect, and what his explanation was of her visits to his fiancee.

"Ah, she did not like my little joke," thought Whitfield. "I shall not be so rude again. Evidently she does not desire to speak about this affair of hers to anyone until the engagement is announced publicly."

He watched her closely. That wistful, faraway look did not escape his eyes, neither did the slight

trembling at the corners of her mouth. He was puzzled at her actions at times. He felt keenly alive to the fact that she was not exactly herself. There was something wanting. She was too serious, too sad, for the same Evelyn of Clover Hills as he had known her the summer previous. And yet in his eyes she was none the less attractive.

"It is this love affair of hers that has caused the change," he decided. "And she is feeling the long separation from John Burney. Well, well!" he said brightly, after an uncomfortable pause, "we thoroughly understand each other in the matter anyway, don't we? There are occasions you know, Miss Drayton, when it is impossible for one to give an explanation of things, and we should make all allowances until the proper time comes to clear matters up."

Evelyn gave a peculiar little laugh.

"Why, of course!" said she. "You and I know each other so well, explanations are really not necessary. But I must be going, Mr. Whitfield. I'm afraid you have already talked too much. Good-by," she said smiling, as she held out her hand. "The next time I come, I expect to see you walking about."

He, too, had discovered that to master his love for her was going to be a slow process, for that day he seemed to feel his loss keenly, and his whole nature cried out in its great need of her.

"Good-by," he said huskily. "I shall always be glad to see you, remember, just whenever you feel that it is proper to come."

"Now what did he mean by that?" thought Evelyn, on her way home. "He knows that it is really not proper for me to call at all, and evidently he wants me to see it in that way? And yet he is always urging me to come, and so is his family. I confess I don't understand him."

The summer was drawing to a close, and Evelyn began to look forward to the coming winter with renewed interest. They had persuaded her father to wait another year before taking a charge. The physician also had advised this. He had improved wonderfully, but they did not want to run any risks.

Mr. Burney was still away, his mother continued critically ill, and the church finally decided to give him a vacation of six weeks, writing him to that effect.

When Whitfield once got on his feet, he gained rapidly. On pleasant days he was wheeled about the grounds in an invalid chair, or seated on the porch with a half dozen or so in attendance, ready to administer to his every want.

During these days Evelyn called only occasionally, and with every visit she grew more and more reserved, for things appeared so different now that he was recovering and looking more like himself every day. She would have ceased calling altogether, had not the entire family insisted on her coming, and made so much of her. They looked forward to her visits with apparently more pleasure than young Whitfield did, frequently being present during her entire stay.

Only occasionally was she left alone with the patient, and so absorbed did they become at such times in their conversation, that Evelyn would forget all about the time, although she was always conscious of a certain reserve in his manner, something that was not altogether natural. Since he had been lifted to a higher conception of life, it had brought them together in a stronger sympathy on many subjects. But the one that lay closest to their hearts they made strenuous efforts to most carefully avoid. An hour appeared like a few minutes. Sometimes it would be the striking of a clock that suddenly aroused Evelyn, or perhaps the tolling of the town bell, and she would jump to her feet, her face suffused in blushes, apologizing for her thoughtlessness, and with a hurried good-by she would be off.

This always amused Whitfield, and he would laugh for some minutes after her departure.

"I suppose it suddenly occurs to her that she might be overstepping the bounds of propriety, by participating in a prolonged tête-à-tête with another gentleman than the one to whom she is engaged," was his interpretation of her confusion and embarrassment at such times.

On her return home after one of these calls, Evelyn met two young women, members of the church, with whom she stopped to chat a few minutes. In the course of the conversation, one of them remarked that she had better return to Clover Hills to live, as it evidently did not agree with her in Philadelphia.

"Yes," spoke up the other, giving her companion a nudge which did not escape Evelyn— "you were very pale when you came here in June, but you are looking more like yourself now. I suppose, though, when *somebody* returns, your happiness will be complete—" with another nudge.

Evelyn looked blank.

"Yes," ventured the other— "the roses too will soon come back to your cheeks then. I hope he won't stay away much longer."

"I don't understand," said Evelyn. "You talk in riddles."

They nudged each other, and laughed at this.

"Oh, of course not—of course not!" they chuckled.

"It will not be long, though, before Mr. Burney will occupy the parsonage with his bride," blurted one.

"Oh, I'm so glad!" spoke up Evelyn. "Do you imagine that she will come from his home-city, Cincinnati, and that he will bring her with him on his return?"

"From Cincinnati!" the women exclaimed, as they moved off, throwing back their heads in a fresh outburst of laughter.

"He laughs best who laughs last," thought Evelyn, greatly amused.

On her arrival at the house that same afternoon, she was much surprised to find a telegram awaiting her from Mr. Kingsley, it ran thus:

"My daughter is very ill, and has expressed a great desire to see you. Can you leave Clover Hills on the eight o'clock

express this evening? I will be at the station, unless you wire me that it is not possible for you to make it.

“GEORGE W. KINGSLEY,
“————Fifth Avenue.”

“Of course, I shall have to go. I could not possibly refuse such a request,” said Evelyn, reflectively.

“It is rather short notice,” said the clergyman. “But if you think you can make that train, I advise you to take it, and not delay any longer than possible in responding to such a request. Poor girl! I remember her—, handsome and gifted in many ways I imagine, but evidently living only for pleasure.”

“I thought she had forgotten all about me by this time, and dropped me forever from her list of acquaintances,” said Evelyn, as her mother and she hurried up the stairs, and together sorted out some clothes to pack in a valise.

“It does seem strange that she should have made such a request,” said Mrs. Drayton. “Evidently, you have exerted some influence over her, Evelyn, and there is no telling what you might be able to do for her.”

It was not a pleasant errand, by any means, to respond to such a request, with so much mystery connected with it, and Evelyn imagined all sorts of things as a possible reason for this interview. “Suppose she simply desires to denounce me as the destroyer of her happiness,” she thought once, when on the train. “Very likely she has heard of my

visits to 'Idlewild,' and has drawn her own conclusions."

After leaving the train, she stood for a moment, looking about her anxiously, when a gentleman of about fifty years approached her. "Excuse me," said he, raising his hat, "but is this Miss Drayton?"

"It is," replied Evelyn.

"I am Mr. Kingsley," said he, extending his hand, "My carriage is right here, just a few steps. Let me have your valise."

In another moment Evelyn was seated in the carriage and whirled over the streets of the great city of New York, by the side of Adele Kingsley's father.

"It was most kind of you to come," said he, "and we shall never be able to express our appreciation."

"I am sure it is a pleasure, Mr. Kingsley, if I can be of any service. I do not, of course, know what your daughter's object is in sending for me, do you?"

"No, Miss Drayton, I do not, that is, not positively. She will not give us the reason for her great desire to see you, but I imagine that it is on spiritual matters; for frequently she has spoken of your Christian character."

"Is her condition still considered to be of a nervous nature?" asked Evelyn.

"My daughter's case, Miss Drayton, has been a puzzle to every doctor, as well as to us," returned the man, sadly. "Without a doubt, her trouble is of a nervous nature, but it is evidently a most puzzling and obscure one. Each physician has his own

particular theory as to the cause. But to-day we are in reality just as much in the dark as ever. Such a breakdown in one who possessed the strong constitution Adele did, is difficult to account for. On the advice of one of the doctors, we took her to the mountains this summer, but it did not agree with her; in fact, her condition became so alarming, that we decided the best place for her was home, and she too, longed to get back herself."

"Do you think she is prepared to die?" ventured Evelyn, her heart full of sympathy for the man beside her, who looked haggard and heavy-eyed.

"I'm afraid not," he answered, with a quick brush of his hand across his eyes. "I am ashamed to confess it, Miss Drayton, but spiritual things have been rarely discussed in my house. Our minister has called to see Adele several times since her return, but I do not see any evidence of her deriving any comfort from his visits."

"I am very sorry to hear it," said Evelyn, with deep feeling, as the carriage stopped in front of one of New York's palatial residences.

She was received very cordially by Mrs. Kingsley, as well as by her sister, who was staying at the house, giving what comfort and help she could.

It was a most melancholy place for a young girl to enter, and a stranger at that for they had given up all hope of Adele's recovery. The physicians had prepared them for the worst.

Evelyn had a private little talk with Mrs. Kingsley before she was taken to the sick room.

"My secret opinion in regard to my daughter's desire to see you, Miss Drayton, is this," said the broken-hearted mother. "That she desires to make some sort of a confession to you. I can not, of course, conceive of its nature, as she flatly refuses to confide in me. Ever since she insisted on our sending for you, I have felt quite confident, that whatever it is she wants to see you about, it must be the principal cause of this trouble of hers. Can you," she pleaded, with the tears now streaming down her face," conceive of anything yourself, that could account for it?"

Evelyn looked confused, and her face burned with blushes. Of course, she knew of nothing for an absolute certainty in regard to Adele, but with the eyes of the poor sorrowing woman bent upon her, she felt that it was her due to confide in her the suspicions she had entertained.

"You have an inkling, Miss Drayton! You do know something!" she cried. "Do not keep it from me. By discovering the cause of this trouble, we may yet be able to save her life."

The tears started to Evelyn's eyes, as she said: "I fully realize how important it is to get at the cause of your daughter's illness, Mrs. Kingsley; and although I know of nothing for a certainty, I have a suspicion of something to which her mysterious condition may at least be in part due."

"Tell me! Oh, do tell me, even if it is only a suspicion!" choked the woman.

"I think it is owing to a hopeless love she has for

a particular gentleman," Evelyn finally acknowledged.

"Do you know his name?" the mother asked eagerly.

Again Evelyn hesitated, blushed and looked confused.

"Oh, I see, I see!" said Mrs. Kingsley, excitedly. "Adele has been jealous of you. Oh, my poor girl."

"Would you be willing, Mrs. Kingsley, to postpone saying anything more on the subject until I see your daughter?" asked Evelyn. "I may be entirely mistaken, and if so, please never mention to any one about this suspicion of mine, which I have given you in great confidence."

"I will not urge you any further, then, under the circumstances," the woman said kindly, realizing that Evelyn was placed in a very embarrassing position.

"Come then, and see Adele. She insists on having an interview with you to-night, and it is growing late."

CHAPTER XXXI.

Adele had requested that Evelyn should enter her room alone, and that they were not to be disturbed until notified.

Evelyn was greatly shocked at the sight of the emaciated girl lying on the bed. She saw at a glance that she was in a high state of nervous excitement, her large dark eyes staring wildly toward the door as she entered.

"Oh, Miss Drayton, I am so glad to see you!" she cried hysterically, holding out her thin arms toward Evelyn. "I have a confession to make to you, which I cannot keep any longer. To do strictly the right thing, it should be made to Frank Whitfield, but I could not send for him, and I felt that I could tell you better, and have you deliver my message to him."

Evelyn dropped on her knees by the bed, and took Adele's trembling hands in hers.

"Try to calm yourself a little first, before you go any further, Miss Kingsley," she said quietly. "And don't be alarmed, because no matter what it is that you have to confess, I will forgive you, and I know that Mr. Whitfield will also."

"Don't be too sure. You will think differently when you hear my story, and despise, hate, and spurn my very name!" cried Adele in a choking

voice, her whole body shaking with nervous tremors.

"Come, now, do try to be calm, and I will listen," said Evelyn, patting her, as one might a troubled child.

"Oh, don't—don't! I can not bear to have you look at me so kindly!" panted Adele. "I know you will turn from me in disgust when I tell you that I picked up a letter addressed to you, which Frank Whitfield dropped when we were both in London, and I opened it, and read it! Now you have it. It is over."

Evelyn gave a start, and her heart beat rapidly. This, then, was the letter so long waited for, and the explanation of Frank Whitfield's apparent rudeness. Her face clouded, and for a moment there arose a feeling of disgust and bitterness toward the invalid.

"So great was my jealousy of you," continued Adele, excitedly, "that I lost all sense of honor, all consideration for everyone but myself, and my wild, passionate desire to win the man I loved. But when failure finally stared me in the face, I craved only for revenge, and swore that, if I could help it, no other woman should win him. I resorted to all sorts of devices, and tried to lower you in his eyes, and him in yours, and have you think he was in love with another."

Adele gasped for breath, and closed her eyes to shut out the gaze of the blue ones above her, while she tried to gather strength to go on.

In the meantime Evelyn had recovered somewhat from the shock this news had given her. And the momentary feeling of revulsion she experienced had entirely disappeared. The terrible condition of the young woman on the bed, both physically and mentally, awakened again the pity and deep sympathy she had all along felt for her.

"How dreadful to get into this state over a defeated love," she thought, "and yet, how could it be otherwise with one so misguided as she, who has never learned self-denial or control, who, in fact, does not seem to know what restraint means."

"Is that all?" asked Evelyn, after a pause.

"Is that all!" cried Adele, opening her eyes again now, and staring bewildered at the sweet face above her.

"Yes—is that all?" repeated Evelyn, calmly.

"Is not that enough? you surely don't desire to hear anything more after that," spoke up Adele, in great surprise, unable to comprehend Evelyn's manner.

"I was only expecting to hear more in explanation of your act," said Evelyn coolly. "But none is necessary, because I can see now for myself that you were not responsible at the time. You could not have been yourself."

At this, Adele raised her hands.

"How did you guess it? Did he see it? I don't want to make any excuses, but as I look back, I am sure I was not myself, as you say. Nor had I been for some time. I had resorted to opiates to

quiet my nerves. The habit grew on me, and soon I could not get along without them. They had a strange effect upon me finally. And that day I tried a new one of which I had heard, and it set my brain on fire. I lost control of myself. Did he—did he say that I was drugged?”

“He has never mentioned the subject to me at all,” returned Evelyn, “I did not think of a drug when I spoke, but of your nervous condition, which alone, by that time, I imagined would be most likely to affect your mind temporarily, and consequently make you irresponsible.”

As she said this, Evelyn leaned over and touched the brow of the sick girl with her lips as though to seal her entire forgiveness.

Already the tense nerves had in a measure become relaxed under the spell of Evelyn’s manner which was so entirely different from what she had expected, and when she felt that kiss her eyes suddenly took a softer expression; then a mistiness appeared in them, and she burst into tears. There were tears in Evelyn’s eyes also, as she gently pushed back the strands of dark hair that had fallen over Adele’s face, and freshened up the pillows without a word. She noticed some water on a table near by, and pouring out a little in a glass, she gave it to Adele.

“I believe you are feeling much better now, with your mind relieved of that burden,” said she, brightly, fully realizing now that, through a tactful handling of the situation on her part, Adele’s life might be spared.

"You are very kind, Miss Drayton! I don't understand," choked Adele. "Would you mind calling me by my first name?"

"Not if you will call me by mine," returned Evelyn.

"Do you really think there is any hope for me? I am so weak, so discouraged."

"I realize that Adele, and yet, I feel that if you will use your will power, your recovery is not by any means impossible."

"But you don't know how weak my will is."

"You can strengthen it if you make the effort."

"And you really forgive me for that dreadful deed, and think that Frank will, also? Oh, he must have known that I was not myself. Those drugs made a perfect beast of me, influencing me to do and say things I never would have done under any other circumstances."

"I realize that and forgive you fully, and I feel quite confident that he will be just as ready to do the same," Evelyn assured her.

"Has he proposed to you?" inquired Adele, tremulously.

"Certainly not, why should he?" spoke up Evelyn, trying hard to prevent the blushes.

"Then there is some mistake, I know it!" declared Adele, growing excited again. "He loves you, Evelyn, he said so in that letter. Oh, if I only had not destroyed it, so that you could not doubt my word," she choked—"and I know you love him, Evelyn. You don't have to tell me in so many words. Didn't he ever write to you again?"

Evelyn shook her head. This news almost staggered her. Could it be possible that he really loved her?

"Nor you to him?" Adele further questioned.

"No."

"Didn't he ever ask why you left that letter unanswered? For he must have thought that you received it."

"Never—I thought he did not answer mine, because in the meantime he had become engaged to Miss Alexander," said Evelyn, making every effort to hide her emotion.

"It is not so, you are greatly mistaken, Frank Whitfield is incapable of being so changeable!" cried Adele. "There is some mystery about it all, but write to-night and tell him all about that lost letter. I will not be content, Evelyn, until this thing is straightened out. I am sure now, that this is the cause of his recent illness."

It was impossible for Evelyn to hide her true feelings from Adele, and she could not deny her love for Frank Whitfield, without telling a deliberate falsehood.

"I know that I could never be worthy of such a man as he, Evelyn. Yes, it is all past, remember. I see it all now," Adele began again, looking off into space wistfully, "that wild infatuation! Oh, how weak I was! and it was not until I became completely prostrated, and the grave loomed up before me in all its hideousness, that I was thoroughly awakened to a full realization of my actions and my peril. It was dreadful! dreadful! to look back

upon that long-continued storm of passion, of jealousy, hatred and the mad desire for revenge, intensified by the effect of drugs. To think of it all became such a hideous nightmare, that I could bear the strain no longer; and I knew that the only relief I could have, would be in a confession. Then, too, I longed to have you here, Evelyn, to help me prepare for death."

"As I said before, Adele, I think that it all depends on yourself to bring about a recovery. I feel that you will have many years before you to prepare for that other life," said Evelyn, encouragingly. Why, you have taken the first step already, because when a person so humbles himself as you have done, in confessing a wrong, he has already started on the road to self-betterment."

Adele gave a little derisive laugh.

"I am very far from taking even the first step!" said she. "I have gone so far on the downward path, that I fear it is impossible for me to step up higher. To think of death makes me the worst coward in the world."

"And yet, Adele, it is possible for you, as well as for us all, to look upon it, just as a child would in returning home to its father's house. The trouble is, you have been keeping your heart closed against your Heavenly Father, and have refused to allow Him to enter. Open it, and tell Him how much you need His help, His guidance, and how you have suffered by keeping Him out of your life; and when you do this, death will lose its horror."

"How can I speak to my Heavenly Father, when I have been such a wicked woman?"

"The more sinful we are, the more ready and eager He is to forgive. It is the sinners Christ came to save, remember, Adele, not the righteous. Do not harden your heart any longer against God. You have never needed His help as much as you do now. If you have any faith in my sincerity, my willingness to come at your request, and forgive you the wrong done me, how much more should you have in One whose love and compassion passeth all understanding?"

"Of course, it is very easy for you to secure this faith, when your life has been so good, so pure; but with me it is different—so very different!" moaned Adele, disconsolately.

"Not at all. There is no living soul to-day, Adele, who has not his weaknesses, his temptations, and I am no exception. Indeed, I have had trials of which you and the world have never dreamed, and if it had not been for my faith in God, and the strength given me, I also might have been just where you are to-day. Yes, Adele, let me assure you that I am obliged to depend daily on His guidance and help. No mortal living can rely on his own strength and be safe. And in times of adversity, it is only through this source that our souls can receive that peace for which they long."

"Would you mind praying for me?" faltered Adele, greatly affected by Evelyn's words. "Perhaps God would hear you. I know not how to pray."

Evelyn bowed her head and closed her eyes, and in a low but distinct voice, offered this prayer :

“Our Father who art an ever-present help in trouble, who art Father of the fatherless, and defender of the weak and erring, draw very near to us at this moment and hold out Thy hand to this Thy sorrowing, penitent child. Let Thy gracious spirit descend upon her, so shedding Thy light and truth, that she cannot fail to see the path that leads to Thee, and the peace her soul now craves. Though she has wandered far from Thee, and failed so far to acknowledge Thee, she realizes now her need and loss, and gladly consecrates herself to Thee. Oh spare her life I pray Thee Lord, and henceforth be her guide in all her actions, her protector in every danger, her strength in every temptation. Teach her to know what life really is, and to walk henceforth as though in Thy presence, to reverence Thy wisdom and power, and day by day to steadily draw a little nearer to Thee.”

To every petition of this prayer, Adele's heart responded. It seemed that her soul had in truth awakened to its needs, and was eager to seek the peace which it now craved.

There was silence for a moment ; and when Evelyn opened her eyes, and met those great black ones looking up at her, she saw a new expression in them. Adele remained strangely quiet and thoughtful, and apparently free from all excitability. She broke the silence, finally, as she said with a far-off look in her eyes :

"If I should be spared, my life in the future will be entirely different. Oh, if God would only spare my life!"

"I think He will, Adele. And He has already worked a change in you. Only have faith, that is all, my dear girl. Lean not on your own strength, nor that of others, but trust only in the Lord, and He will keep and direct you."

"I am gradually seeing it all, Evelyn,—my great mistake, in the view of life I have had. It is love of self that has made me a slave of Satan's, and I believe it is this that keeps all of us poor sinners from going on unto perfection, as you advised in your talk that Sunday evening."

"Yes, you are right, Adele. It is the power of the flesh. Even the most loyal Christian knows just what an influence it exerts. But the stronger the influence, the harder we must fight to bring ourselves into subjection. It is self-love that nearly always stands in the way of resigning our will to God's. And yet, 'the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, that call upon Him in truth.' When the Spirit once enters your heart, Adele, keep always in close touch with it, so that its larger development may not be retarded. This is the secret of all those who grow in grace."

For just a few minutes more, Evelyn talked, pointing out the way of life everlasting, in her simple but forcible manner, enlightening Adele's mind to a better understanding of her true relationship to her God.

"And now, I am going to say good-night," she said, kissing the patient. "It is time for you, as well as the whole household, to be abed. And I want you to remember, as you close your eyes, Adele, that I don't look upon that act of yours with any feelings of anger or reproach. Had you been in a normal condition, you never would have committed it."

"And you fully forgive me?" asked Adele, clinging to Evelyn's hand.

"I do, from the depths of my heart."

CHAPTER XXXII.

During this interview the entire household was anxiously waiting its outcome. When Evelyn joined Mr. and Mrs. Kingsley in the library, they read by her face that she had something encouraging to relate.

"It is as I supposed—your daughter has been suffering from the effects of a hopeless love," Evelyn blushing informed them. "She has been almost insanely jealous of me, but I am glad to say that she sees now her great mistake in allowing herself to be so controlled by an infatuation, and permitting it to prey on her mind until it sapped her very life. What she desired to see me especially for, was simply to apologize for some little acts of her that have disturbed her conscience not a little, but for which I feel she was not at the time responsible."

"And do you really think, now that her mind is relieved of this, there will be any hopes of her recovery?" asked Mrs. Kingsley.

"So far as I am able to see to-night, I do,—in fact, I think there is already an improvement."

"You have, then, accepted her apology?" questioned Mr. Kingsley.

"Why, certainly!" spoke up Evelyn. "I told her not to give those things another thought."

"You are very kind," choked the poor mother,

wiping her eyes. She was, herself, almost on the verge of a collapse, which Evelyn very plainly saw, and she spared them both the knowledge of that one disgraceful act, which she felt would in all probability affect them seriously. And she hoped that it would never be revealed to them.

"Would you object to telling us the name of the gentleman with whom she is in love?" ventured Mrs. Kingsley.

Evelyn flushed up again and dropped her eyes for an instant.

"Mr. Whitfield," she answered, with some confusion. "Adele has requested me to tell you this."

"Frank Whitfield!" exclaimed the gentleman.

"Is it possible?" cried Mrs. Kingsley.

"I never dreamed of him," sighed Mr. Kingsley. "There were so many regular callers here, Miss Drayton, I never could have guessed, and Frank Whitfield, I believe, was not nearly so frequent a caller as some others."

"Yes, and Adele was always so reticent in regard to her preferences," added Mrs. Kingsley.

"She was, then, jealous of you all the time!" said Mr. Kingsley, shaking his head thoughtfully. "Did she have any real cause to be?"

"I don't think she had. Mr. Whitfield called on me only occasionally, and we were simply very good friends."

"You are not engaged, then?" said Mr. Kingsley.

Evelyn cleared her throat, and her face turned very red.

"Certainly not," she answered.

"I see it all now, my poor girl!" he said, mournfully shaking his head. "Her idea in going to Clover Hills, her ever-increasing restlessness and excitability.—I suppose she was jealous of every young woman to whom he paid the least attention. As she grew worse in London, I imagine that it was owing to his marked attentions to a Miss Alexander, for it was the opinion of many that he was desperately in love with her."

"If we had only known, we might have been able to ward this off," said Mrs. Kingsley. "Do you think, Miss Drayton, that she is really cured of this infatuation, and resigned to her loss?"

"I do. And I feel quite confident that with the proper management, she will recover entirely. This confession, I think, will make a turning point in her condition, and if you are willing, I will remain a few days. I feel that I have exerted an influence over her that may be for her good."

The tears filled Mrs. Kingsley's eyes at this kind offer.

"Oh, Miss Drayton!" she sobbed. "We will be so grateful if you think you can do anything for her, be it ever so little."

"Our gratitude is too deep for expression," said Mr. Kingsley, his own voice tremulous with emotion.

Before retiring, Evelyn wrote to Frank Whitfield, as Adele had desired, and related to him the whole affair, with the exception of one thing—that

Adele had mentioned anything about the contents of the letter that never reached her.

It was some time past midnight before she succeeded in composing herself for sleep. To learn that Frank Whitfield actually loved her, was a thought that filled her with a joy indescribable. The love that from its very birth, she had been obliged to fight constantly, in her efforts to suppress, was now for the first time allowed its full sway, coloring her whole life anew. It gave her a new staying power she could not explain, that held everything in check, and kept her under complete control; in fact, she never remembered feeling so strong, so eager to do, so anxious to help. She could have forgiven any wrong done her; and her heart went out toward Adele with a sympathy that increased in proportion as she contemplated her own happiness. She was ready to make any sacrifice, if by so doing she could aid ever so little in coaxing Adele back to health, and in encouraging her to go forward in the new step she had taken for her spiritual welfare.

When she finally did fall asleep, it was a quiet, restful one, and she rose the next morning so full of joy, so buoyant in spirits, that she longed to make the whole world happy. She bemoaned the fact that fairies were only myths, and that it was not possible for one at her request, to touch the world with her magic wand that morning, and send a flood of joy to the heart of every suffering soul on God's earth.

Like a newly-opened flower she seemed in her great happiness; and when she entered the sick room again, it was with a radiant countenance. A beautiful glow suffused her cheeks, and every movement, every act, reflected the buoyancy of her spirits.

Adele brightened up perceptibly at the very sight of her, and basked in the influence she shed, like a withered plant that had become chilled, and drooped for the want of sunlight and proper care.

And it was not only in the sick room that her influence was felt; the entire household appeared to be benefited by it. Her optimistic view of Adele's condition, her ready sympathy, and bright spirits gave a fresh impetus to the fallen hopes of the parents, in regard to their daughter's recovery.

On the third day after her arrival, Evelyn was handed a letter, which she knew at a glance was from Whitfield. Several pages were devoted entirely to Adele, expressing much sympathy for her, even though he had been shocked at her confession, and he extolled Evelyn for responding so readily to her request; and her kindness in offering to remain for a while, which he knew would be of untold benefit to Adele. "And now, I am going to give you a surprise, so prepare yourself," the letter continued—"I believe I once mentioned to you a great sorrow which had affected my mother's health; a sorrow I was in hopes of alleviating in a great measure, by a course entirely different from that which has very unexpectedly happened. It may be possible that Miss Kingsley has told you something about it, although

I had requested her, as a great favor, not to mention it in Clover Hills. My sister, who eloped nine years ago, when she was nineteen, has returned home. The first time we have seen her or heard anything about her since the day she left home to join the young man whom she was determined to marry, although my father had forbidden him the house. I am sure you could never guess who my sister is. Mrs. Bentley, the very same who lived just below you in Clover Hills, and who owes her life to-day to the kindness of your family and yourself. She has told us all about it, the whole story, from beginning to end, and I can only say that no words can express our gratitude, and the feeling we entertain toward you all. I am hoping as well as the rest of the family to see you again, before you return to Philadelphia, that we may talk about it with you in person, as we have with your parents.

“My sister went to Mr. Barnes’s house first, accompanied by her three children, and told your father her story, and her determination to seek her parents and ask forgiveness. It is not necessary to state that your father was more than surprised, but he was equally pleased at the prospect of the union and the joy he knew it would bring. He came over and told my father about it privately, leaving it to him to prepare my mother for the news. For months I have been making every effort to locate my sister, and if possible to bring about a reconciliation, but I could not obtain a trace of her after she left Boston.”

After reading the letter, Evelyn pondered for a long time. The news it contained almost stunned her, so very unexpected was it. "I can scarcely realize it," she thought. "Mrs. Bentley, Frank Whitfield's sister! It seems like a dream! and to think, we never had the slightest inkling of her identity. What she must have suffered all those years, reared as she had been; and what a household that must be now."

From this, her thoughts finally turned to the great subject so near her heart. "Strange that he said so little about that letter," she mused. "Could Adele have been suffering from a mental aberration, and imagined all this, or misconstrued things in her highly excited state?" She began to doubt that the letter Adele read had actually stated that he loved her.

Suddenly a new thought dawned upon her. Could it be that he had heard the gossip in Clover Hills about Mr. Burney and herself. It was not at all unlikely, and if so, it readily explained his silence on that subject and many other mysterious things. She was now in as much of a predicament as before. She could not, after all, stake any truth in Adele's interpretation of that letter; and finally concluded that there was no other alternative than to wait and watch developments. The next mail brought letters from her family, with their version of the home-coming of Mrs. Bentley.

There was a marked improvement in Adele's condition as the days went by. When she learned

that Frank Whitfield had forgiven her, it lifted a weight that had been crushing her for months.

"As soon as I am strong enough, I want to see him, Evelyn," she said one day. "I will never be content until I meet him face to face, and tell him in person of my awful act. Perhaps I will feel equal to it in a few days. But you must go back to Clover Hills, it is too selfish of me to keep you here. There is some reason why he does not speak, because I know that he loves you."

Evelyn blushed and said nothing. She had no inclination to acquaint Adele with her suspicions regarding the matter; besides, the idea of Adele being mentally unbalanced at the time she read the letter, was ever present with her. There was no telling how much her imagination may have been influenced by the over-wrought state of her nerves.

"Suppose you go back to-morrow and return again in a day or so," suggested Adele.

"If you think it advisable I will. I'm afraid, though, I will not be able to return for some time. It will be just a week to-morrow evening since I came."

"Can it be possible?" said Adele, "I do not like to think of your leaving me, Evelyn. You have done so much for me; but this mystery must be cleared up—for my sake, for yours, and for his. Oh, Evelyn, do not try to hide it from me, I know that you love him. There is so much at stake.—Ask him if he remembers the contents of that letter you missed, and that you would enjoy so much

hearing what it contained. If you do this, I know it will bring things to a climax," urged Adele.

Evelyn smiled, and again said nothing. A little later in the day she made all her preparations to take her departure the next morning.

Just as she was leaving the house, the mail was handed to the butler. Two in the package were for her. She took them with her, and did not open them until seated in the train. She opened the one from Mrs. Bentley first, which ran as follows:

"MY DEAR EVELYN: By this time I imagine that you have recovered from the news contained in my brother's letter, and in those from your family, concerning me. I don't know exactly what they have told you, but I was seized to-day with the desire to tell you the story from my viewpoint. There are some things they may not have mentioned, although I told much of my past history to your parents, the dear good people, to whom I owe so much. It seems so strange to see them in my home, and yet so delightful, for they will henceforth ever be to me like a part of my family. But to begin my story—

"My parents greatly opposed my marriage, as I believe I once informed you; but I would not listen to their advice and entreaties, and finally eloped, thinking that the deed once done, they would put all prejudice aside, and receive us with their blessing, as is so often done. In this instance it proved to be an exception to the general rule.

"My father wrote me that my husband should never enter his door, and that I had broken his heart, as well as my mother's, by marrying a man who was, in their opinion totally unfit for the husband of any respectable girl, and that I had not only disgraced myself by such a union,

but the whole family, to such an extent that they would never recover from it.

"His letter so disappointed and incensed me, that I determined there and then to isolate myself from them completely, and keep my destination a secret. I wrote in return only a few lines, telling my parents that if they refused to recognize my husband, they should their daughter also, and that I would say good-by to them forever.

"My grandmother had left me thirty thousand dollars, which my father, at my request, sent me. I was surprised at this, hardly expecting it under the circumstances, as I was not of age, but I suppose he was afraid that I might be in absolute want.

"This money I invested in mortgages in Boston, where we went to live, and where my husband had just secured a position in a banking house. It was not long before he was discharged, not being capable of retaining it, nor any other, as I very soon discovered. The income from the mortgages was consequently all we had to live on.

"How it was, I ever became infatuated with such a man, will always remain a mystery. I was young, inexperienced, and he handsome, with his true character hidden under a mannerism that was then very pleasing and alluring.

"I very soon realized how greatly I had been deceived, for his true character gradually revealed itself, and he proved to be just exactly what my father had told me he was, but which I would never believe.

"It was not very long before my eyes were opened to the fact, that it was not love that I had felt for him, but simply an infatuation of the senses, and also that his only aim in urging me to marry secretly was the fact of my having some money, which he had planned to get possession of. Fortunately I insisted on investing it myself, and always attended to all business transactions.

"I was aware before our marriage that he indulged in intoxicants, but I had never seen him actually under their influence, nor did I know that he was a steady drinker.

"After our marriage he was not so particular. He was always upbraiding me for keeping my money so close, and it seemed that, at first, just to torment me, he would absent himself from home frequently, and return in a frightful state of intoxication. But the habit grew on him, and I was forced to give him money to satisfy his unnatural cravings. I will pass over the years of misery that were my lot before we moved to Clover Hills. And what my life was there, you already know.

"When I learned of my parents making Clover Hills their summer home, I was in despair, for fear of meeting them on the street. I would have moved, but by that time my income had become so reduced, that I could not meet the extra expense.

"As the children came, I was forced every now and then to sell a mortgage, most of them being small ones. During the summers my parents spent at Clover Hills, I kept myself as secluded as possible. I was not afraid of my husband's being recognized, as a great change had been wrought in his appearance, and the children, of course, they had never seen.

"How homesick I was at times you can well imagine. How I longed to take my children, and fall at the feet of my parents in their beautiful home so near me, but pride still held me back, although I knew their hearts were breaking, and that I would be welcomed with open arms.

"Those years of suffering and privation had so hardened my heart that the finer instincts of my nature appeared to be almost entirely obliterated; but when I came under the influence of yourself and family, my better-self began gradually to awaken again. And one Sunday evening I left the children with a maid, and for the first time in years went to church. I sat up in the gallery, on the last row. It was the night you took your father's place and gave the people a little sermon of your own.

"I cannot tell you how it affected me, how vividly it brought up my past life in all its selfishness and waywardness. Several times that week I came very near casting aside

my pride, and seeking my parents' forgiveness, but somehow my courage failed me. It seemed as though I would almost rather die than humiliate myself before them, in relating the tale of woe connected with my married life, after so boastfully disregarding them.

"Since that stormy night when you took me in, penniless and homeless, I have become a changed woman. Your kindness, consideration and encouragement that night, together with that of your parents, afterward, was, I believe, the means of not only saving my life, but my mind as well. And to think that I was a stranger, with a mysterious past, which never should have been closed so long against you, the only friends I had! Yes, Evelyn, through your influence and that of your parents, I at last humbled myself, and in less than a day after I had fully decided to return—I was at Elder Barnes' house with my three children to seek an interview with your family first.

"My husband and I were both so ashamed of our poverty, and so in fear that we might be discovered, that we changed our name to Bentley. My husband's name is George W. Morton, as I suppose Frank has already informed you."

The other letter was from Marie Anderson, which contained news that gave Evelyn a keen pleasure. Alfred Scott and she were to be married in October.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Evelyn arrived at Clover Hills in time to take lunch with the family.

It was interesting to hear in person, all they had to tell about the home-coming of Mrs. Bentley; of the talk it created in the town, and also of the meeting of her parents with the Whitfields.

"We are invited to take dinner at "Idlewild" to-morrow evening, said Mrs. Drayton, "yourself included, if you returned from New York in time."

"Then I will not call there this afternoon, as I intended," said Evelyn. "I am so anxious to see Mrs. Bentley," she added, with a little tremor in her voice, and the color deepening in her cheeks. The very thought of a visit to "Idlewild" set her heart to fluttering. Ever since the idea developed that Adele might have been laboring under an hallucination when reading that letter, causing her to misconstrue its contents, Evelyn made an effort to check the great rush of joy that she had experienced, when those words first fell on her ear.—"He loves you, Evelyn, I know it." The more she thought of it, the more confident she became, that Adele's interpretation was a wrong one; especially after recalling many of Whitfield's remarks, two of which she found herself repeating over and over. "There are times, you know, when it is impossible for one to give an explanation of things, and we

should in the meanwhile make all allowances, until the proper time comes to clear matters up.”—And —“I was so sorry that our correspondence had to come to such an abrupt ending.”

“Now, what else could such remarks signify, but an engagement that was not as yet publicly announced,” she argued frequently; “or if it has not actually developed that far, he must at least be in love. If it were not the case, he would talk differently, act differently and surely would have written again if he thought that his letter had gone astray. Yes, even if he believed the rumors that have been circulating about John Burney and myself, it would not account for his actions. Even then he never would have been so reticent regarding the correspondence; but would at least have asked me something in regard to that letter. And yet,” she would further meditate, “it is true that I did not ask him anything in regard to my letter on account of similar rumors concerning himself.”

All such soliloquies, however, explained nothing definitely, and they always wound up with the same conclusion, that there was still much connected with the whole affair that was very mysterious, and she was staking all her hopes on having the mystery cleared up on her visit to “Idlewild.”

It was four o'clock when she started out to make a few calls, after which she continued on to the creek for a last visit to some of her favorite haunts. She was quite sure that another opportunity would not present itself before she returned to Philadel-

phia. The next day would be devoted to packing and entertaining many callers that were expected, in view of their leaving on Monday, winding up in the evening with the dinner at "Idlewild"; and on Sunday, the greater part of the day was expected to be spent in the church.

When she reached one of her favorite nooks, the same where she and John Burney had met that afternoon, she decided to rest there a while before returning. For some moments she sat almost motionless, under the influence of the still, dreamy atmosphere of the woods. An unusual quietness prevailed, though Nature spoke in a thousand different ways, but so soft and low were its whisperings, blending in such exquisite harmony, that on Evelyn, the effect was like that of a mother's lullaby on the nerves of a tired, sleepy child. The happenings of the past week had been a greater tax on her than she realized.

She actually found herself nodding several times. But it seemed to relieve the drowsiness that had suddenly seized her, for she brightened up considerably, opened a small account book, and was soon busily engaged in figuring up some domestic problems in the way of fall expenses, that must be met.

The small amount of money that still remained in bank must be drawn very cautiously, until she and Elinore received their first month's salary.

The winter outfit of each member of the family had already been talked over and planned by her mother and herself. Mrs. Drayton had a wonder-

ful faculty for fixing over, and manœuvring in the way of clothes, as in all other domestic lines, which proved a great blessing, especially since her husband's resignation, and Evelyn actually laughed aloud once, when she figured up what it had cost the past year to clothe a family of seven.

"And yet, we all present a good appearance," she thought. "Mother, in truth, should have a tablet in the Hall of Fame."

The clergyman had lightened things considerably by writing for two religious papers during the summer. But the great problem at present was how to manage in the most economical way, with the money on hand, for two months. It was this problem that Evelyn was working out, when she was startled by the sound of a footstep, and looking up, she was astonished to see Whitfield standing before her.

"Why, Mr. Whitfield!" she exclaimed, "is it possible that you are strong enough to walk this far?"

Her heart beat very fast, and she made a mighty effort to hide her confusion.

"Do you realize that it has been a week since you saw me? A convalescent can make rapid strides in that time, you know," said he, as they shook hands. "I had a great desire to-day to seek my favorite haunt. I have not seen this spot since last spring, a year ago. But when did you return, and how did you leave Adele?"

"I returned this morning and am glad to say I left Adele with every indication of a recovery. I am

very anxious to see your sister, and would have gone to your house this afternoon, Mr. Whitfield, but when I heard that we were invited to dine with you to-morrow evening I postponed my visit. It all seems so strange, I cannot get used to it. I don't see how she could have kept such a secret all this time."

"That is a mystery to us all, Miss Drayton; poor Esther, I cannot get the sad story of her married life out of my mind. It was dreadful, dreadful! And what we owe to you and your family, we shall never be able to express."

For some time they talked of Mrs. Bentley, as Evelyn had known her. Then the conversation turned to Adele again; but not one word did Whitfield say about the contents of the letter. Several times Evelyn made an effort to carry out Adele's suggestion, and ask him what the letter contained, or if he had expressed in it any new views on religious matters. But her agitation would get the better of her every time she made the attempt to speak; and so she repeatedly put it off. She seemed to have lost the self-control she had previously acquired, and that had enabled her to hide her heart-sorrow from him all these weeks, and to fight her way successfully so far, through the many trying ordeals, since that first meeting in the sick chamber.

There was a long pause at one time. Each appeared to be deeply absorbed in some serious thoughts.

"Evidently, this is a place of which you also are

fond," the young man remarked; the first to break the silence.

"It is one of them; and yet, when I consider them all, I don't know but that it is the most beautiful spot along the creek. For a peculiarly soothing effect it is, at any rate," said Evelyn. "I can vouch for that. Awhile ago I did something I never did before—fell asleep sitting on this bench."

"I am not at all surprised; I have dozed myself, a number of times, in the very same place," laughed Whitfield. "Do you know, Miss Drayton," said he, growing serious again, "I have often fancied that my happiest moments would be spent here. Indeed, there were times when I have already been so delightfully entertained, that I could not have slept under any circumstances."

The young man's face relaxed again, he smiled, and turned his eyes wistfully toward the field where the race had taken place, then up toward the hill-top, where his companion on the bench was crowned the Queen of the May.

Evelyn tried hard to interpret, but failed. "At any rate," she concluded, "whatever it was that so entertained and pleased him, I am sure that it was not in any way connected with Miss Alexander. I don't believe she ever saw Clover Hills."

"Yes," she said, watching him with a puzzled look, as he still gazed toward the hill-top, with a dreamy, far-away expression, "if at all in sympathy with nature, one can be delightfully entertained in a thousand ways."

He turned toward her at this, "I always think of a certain little poem when I come here, two verses only of which I remember, said he, "and the composer I have long forgotten."

"Beautiful things in the heart of the woods,
Silence and sweetness, and songs of birds,
A gentle breeze in the leafy trees,
And thoughts of peace, too deep for words.

"Out of the clamor and dust and din,
Into the woods as one enters in,
Leaving the crowded, traveled way,
Who will, may muse of heaven to-day."

"Beautiful!" said Evelyn. "Can you imagine a person wholly incapable of experiencing any inspiration in a place like this? And yet, there are thousands, I have no doubt, to whom nature makes no appeal whatever."

Whitfield nodded; he was looking off toward the hill-top wistfully. Suddenly he turned his eyes toward Evelyn, and moved just a little closer to her.

"Miss Drayton, I am so glad I ran across you this afternoon," said he, "as I have some news in store for you, which I would prefer telling you privately, and another opportunity may not present itself before you leave Clover Hills."

"You have," said she, throwing him a questioning look, while her heart started that rapid beating again, which always gave her the sensation of choking.

"I was right," she thought, "Adele has been

laboring under an hallucination of some kind in regard to that letter. He is going to tell me about his love affair."

"It is a little secret of mine," he went on, smiling now, and watching Evelyn intently. "One I did not tell even my family until yesterday."

Evelyn breathed still harder; it was almost impossible to look calm, and hide her emotion, as she raised her eyes to his in expectancy, trying her best to school herself for the blow.

"I have changed my plans for the future entirely, Miss Drayton. I have given up law, and since last fall, barring this summer, of course, I have been studying for the ministry, entering the theological school at Edinburgh."

This was so sudden, so very unexpected, that Evelyn could not hide her surprise, her great joy. Her countenance fairly beamed with a beautiful enthusiasm; and with it all, the tears filled her eyes, and her breath came quick and short.

"You,—you don't think I am worthy!" he faltered, much affected by her deep emotion and silence, hardly knowing how to interpret it all.

At last she found her voice.

"I know that you never would have taken such a step, Mr. Whitfield, without a thorough knowledge of its significance," said she, tremulously. "I am so surprised, but so pleased," she continued, smiling through the tears, slowly regaining her equilibrium. "You have my most heartfelt congratulations—my very best wishes for success," she added,

after a pause, holding out her hand which he clasped warmly.

"Thank you," said he. "I suppose it will interest you to know that shortly after I had experienced that change in my life, I was suddenly seized one night with the desire to use my talents in the cause of the gospel. I gave the subject considerable thought before I decided, but the more I pondered over it, the more desirous and eager I became to lead others to a spiritual uplifting, and I was at last thoroughly convinced that God had called me to work in His vineyard, that He desired me to make this use of my life. And now, my soul rejoices in going forward in His service. It is to the young men that I desire principally to talk," he continued with deep earnestness. "In their behalf I will exert my energies, give my prayers. I have seen enough of life to be appalled by the great waste of manhood. Young men appear almost powerless to withstand the temptations the world holds out on every side. How many have I seen start out in life equipped with the making of a fine man, only to be wrecked in a short time by the allurements that encompass them, and which they make little effort to resist, until finally, in many cases, every vestige of their moral fiber is destroyed, and they sink to the level of moral perverts. Ah, yes, Evelyn, I shall use the remainder of my life to implore young men to climb up to what is best in their natures, instead of descending to their lower instincts. And there is only one way, and it is to cultivate the

spiritual side of their natures, so that every man may desire to seek his true relationship to his Maker, his God, Whom he must acknowledge, sooner or later."

He paused, and wiped the beads of perspiration that had gathered on his forehead. His face was flushed and his eyes appeared to shine with the fire of a soul-stirring enthusiasm.

Evelyn sat spell-bound. There was no doubt in her mind now but that he was a chosen servant of God's, appointed for this special work. Never had any words come from human lips that had given her the pleasure these did.

This is the latent power that I have always felt he possessed, she thought. And I know he will succeed.

The thought of his engagement left her mind entirely. It was as though she had never heard of Miss Alexander or Adele Kingsley. She felt strangely drawn to him by a force it was impossible to resist. She had noticed that he called her Evelyn, the first time since that day he opened his eyes and saw her by his bedside.

After a slight pause he began again:

"Yes, Evelyn, I hope that my life will be spared for years, to do what I can for the young men. It is through them that society must be uplifted. To many, to-day, marriage is a boredom, its sacredness scoffed at. And what is to become of the man with no love for the home, no desire to make one? It means that he is degenerating. There is no other

hope of keeping this nation from an early decay than to protect the foundation of civilization—the home. And as our President has recently declared, that no artistic or scientific development, no material prosperity, no commercial expansion, will count in the great work of construction, unless the foundation of society, which is the home, is made sound. Yes, I thoroughly believe, Evelyn, that the leavening power of the nation comes from the fire-side.”

Again he wiped the moisture from his forehead.

“I cannot tell you how pleased I am to hear all this!” said Evelyn, her eyes still glistening with tears held back.

“Are you really so pleased, so interested, in my new calling?” asked he, his heart stirred to its depths by her manner; the mutual sympathy that stirred his soul.

At this, Evelyn gathered herself together. A deep glow spread over her entire face, as she thought—What must he think of me? It was entirely out of place for me to display such marked feeling. Why can’t I keep myself under better control?

“I could not be anything else but deeply interested in you,” she said, “when you were at one time my protégé”—with an attempt at a little playful humor to cover her embarrassment.

“So you think, then, that I have done you credit?” he queried.

“More than I ever dreamed,” she replied.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Whitfield suddenly became grave again.

"Miss Drayton," he said, "there is something about you that is not altogether natural. You are not the same young woman you were last summer."

"Oh, so many tell me that!" said Evelyn, laughing to hide her real feelings. "But I can say the same of you."

"Your spirits appear to have lost much of their buoyancy, and your eyes have not the same expression," he went on, ignoring her remark completely. "In view of the deep interest I take in you, and our close friendship, I hope you will pardon the liberty I take in speaking this way, but I feel that before we part this summer, I must ask if there is anything that troubles you, anything in which I could be of help."

Several times he had imagined that there was some secret trouble affecting her, some financial difficulty, perhaps, that might be giving the whole family much anxiety since her father's resignation. Just to what extent they were depending on Evelyn and her sister, he did not know, but from many little things, he feared that they were in serious financial straits.

"You are very kind, Mr. Whitfield, and I appreciate your offer more than I can say, but I am in no trouble whatever, that is, no trouble except a

foolish fancy of mine which I have been entertaining, and permitted to control me to a great extent."

"Oh!" said he, sinking into reverie. Here was a new mystery for contemplation. That foolish fancy, as she calls it, is something much more tangible, he thought, or it never would have affected her as she describes.

"You see, Mr. Whitfield," she went on, with a little forced laugh, "it is just this. I am growing older, and consequently more sedate, more dignified, you know. I do not believe you realize that I am past twenty-one. I have been such a child in so many ways, and, would you believe it?—have romped so much with the children of Clover Hills ever since we came here, that I actually think some of them look upon me as they would a playmate of their own age. It is really very amusing, and because I have held myself aloof from them somewhat this summer, they don't understand it, and seem to stand in awe of me. I refused to jump the rope at the request of some children the other day, and they looked absolutely crestfallen. One of them ran after me, and throwing her arms about me, she whispered with tears in her eyes: 'I'm sorry you are ill, Sister Evelyn! When do you think you will be well enough to play with us again?' "

Whitfield laughed.

"So even the children have noticed the change," said he.

"Yes, but they will soon get accustomed to it. I think it's time I was acting like a real grown-up."

"Don't try to be any different than you always were!" said Whitfield earnestly. "The world is in sore need of just such temperaments as yours. And can't you see that your effort to reform is not a success? It is not natural—besides, none is required."

It was Evelyn's turn to laugh now.

"Well," said she, "if you really think I am at my best as a child, I shall try to take your advice, and continue to be one. But I must be going, Mr. Whitfield," rising suddenly.

"Oh, don't say that!" returned he, rising with her. "It is too delightful to go indoors—besides, I have something more to say. Do sit down, please!" he entreated. "See how thoughtless you are, keeping an invalid standing!"

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" cried Evelyn. "I can't refuse after that—you surely have me a prisoner now."

"Thank you," said he. "That is much more comfortable for a poor tottering mortal such as I—" giving a prolonged sigh, as he stretched himself in a reclining position in the corner of the rustic seat.

"I wanted to tell you again," he began, "how much I owe to your influence in bringing about this great change in my life. It was some time before I discovered the way, as I have told you, although at first I thought I understood. I soon found, however, that there was something wanting. I was not content, and there remained so many doubts—and then I discovered that I failed to find that peace for

which I longed, because I had not renounced self, by making a complete subjection of my will to God's. And then—well, you know the rest, of course—going through the same experience.”

Evelyn nodded.

“Doubting is the great drawback to thousands who would otherwise be serving their God,” said she. “My father could tell you of hundreds of instances that have come under his notice alone. Time and again people have sought interviews with him, just for the purpose of trying to clear doubts, and to argue all sorts of questions. And frequently, I am sorry to say, many have sought interviews with but one aim—to try to trip him up. They will take a keen delight in arguing church ordinances alone, will quote the Bible from Genesis to Revelation in proof of their assertions. Some appear to be perfectly familiar with the entire book, and yet, with all this, have not the slightest conception of what Christianity is, and refuse absolutely to apply to themselves any of the lessons they are so eager to quote.”

“I see very clearly now, that it is this very doubting, and the consequent hardening of our hearts that closes our ears to the voice of the spirit,” said Whitfield. “And I also see that it often requires some great trial to awaken the conscience of the unbeliever. So long as we are happy, and things go well with us, we do not often feel the need of any spiritual aid and comfort. But when we suddenly find ourselves weighed down with sorrow and heavy

burdens, life loses its interest. And again, when health is wrecked, and we feel life slipping away from us, we realize that the sustaining power we need is not of this earth. Yes, I believe that many are brought to the very brink of the grave before the soul is awakened. After all, do we not owe all that is good to suffering, all that is best in our natures?"

"Yes, and it is true," said Evelyn musingly, "that God frequently makes Himself known in our darkest hour. But you, for one, Mr. Whitfield, cannot say this; you have had so many blessings, except of course, your poor health the past year or so."

He started at this.

How little she knows of my secret sorrows, my struggles! thought he. "There are many who carry burdens of which the world never knows, Miss Drayton," he said, with a sad ring in his voice.

Evelyn threw him a searching glance. What could he mean? There were many things that still puzzled her, much in his manner she failed to account for. But she shrank from showing any inquisitiveness in view of the mystery that still enveloped him, and the fear constantly hanging over her, that what Adele told her was only the outcome of an overwrought imagination.

"There is one other thing I wish to say before we part this summer," he began, after a pause. "And it is this—that my prayer for you will ever be that the one who is fortunate enough to win you for his bride, may be wholly worthy of you, and capable of appreciating you as you should be."

Evelyn looked straight ahead through the trees. She could not meet his eyes. She felt her own growing dim.

"There is nothing farther from my thoughts than marriage, Mr. Whitfield," said she. "In fact, I never expect to marry."

"What!" cried he excitedly. "You are joking!" and the young man laughed hoarsely.

"I never was more in earnest in my life," said she quietly, still gazing straight ahead.

"Then what are all the rumors I hear?" asked he eagerly.

"Simply village gossip, Mr. Whitfield. But I really must be going now. See the sun—it has lowered considerably. Haven't you noticed how much shorter the days are?" said she, rising, principally to hide her agitation, which she feared would get beyond control.

"Yes. But please do not go just yet. I want to talk to you about this. I am so surprised. Do you realize that I am standing, and an invalid, too?" sighed he.

"Oh, how very rude of me!" seating herself. "How long am I to be kept a prisoner in this way?" asked she, laughing.

"Until you answer me this," said he. "Is there really no truth in the report that you are engaged to Mr. Burney, and that it will be announced in the fall?"

"I give you my word of honor that there is no truth whatever in the report," said she. "I am not

engaged to Mr. Burney, never was engaged to him, and never will be."

At this the young man threw back his head in a loud burst of laughter. He felt as though he had suddenly grown wings, and was ready to soar exultantly to the very skies. The laugh was so prolonged, and so unlike him, that Evelyn turned toward him in alarm. She wondered if he were having a sudden return of fever, and growing flighty.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" he said, coming to a sudden stop. "You must think I am raving, but really, Miss Drayton, it is very amusing, so absurdly ridiculous," wiping his eyes. "To think how I have guarded myself out of respect for your wishes, not to mention anything relating to this supposed secret engagement. And how I have repeatedly cautioned the family to make no allusions to it whatever, as it was very evident you were trying hard to keep it quiet until fall. My, my—it is really very funny!" with another peal.

"I am glad it affords you so much amusement!" said she, her spirits rising with his, and giving way to a merry ripple of laughter herself, just like the Evelyn of old.

"Now that I have answered your question, will you answer mine?" asked she, when they subsided, eager to grasp the opportunity now presented to clear for good all the mystery connected with him.

"I will answer any question that you desire to ask," declared he.

"Is there any truth in the report that you are engaged to Miss Alexander?"

"Engaged? I engaged, Miss Drayton! Why, certainly not!" throwing back his head in a fresh peal of laughter.

Evelyn began to fear that some serious consequences would follow this unusual hilarity; in fact, he was not like himself at all. His actions were more like the uncontrollable outbursts of an hysterical woman. She was afraid to laugh herself, for fear of prolonging it, though her own heart was almost ready to burst with a joy she was making every effort to subdue.

"Evidently you are very much disappointed that I am not," said he, sobering at her gravity.

"Why shouldn't I, if all the nice things I have heard about the lady are true?" returned she, the dimples playing about her mouth, and her eyes agleam with humor.

"How could you imagine such a thing for an instant, even though you did see that report in the papers? Do I look like an engaged man? I would like to know where the heartless creature is who has deserted me at such a time."

"That was what I couldn't understand," said Evelyn. "But I came to the conclusion that circumstances were such, perhaps, that she could not be here. Then, too, I thought of your engagement, as you did of mine—that it was to be kept a secret until fall."

"This is the best joke I've heard for many a

day. To think that we both should have staked so much on a few idle reports," laughed he. But the next moment he grew very serious.

"Until I heard the story of that missing letter, Miss Drayton, I was under the impression that it had either gone astray, or that you did not answer it, because in the meantime you had become engaged to Mr. Burney."

"Just as though I could have been so rude," said Evelyn. "I would have made some sort of an explanation had such been the case."

"And most certainly I would also, had I been engaged," declared he.

Again they both laughed merrily. They were now like two children in their enjoyment of it all, and forgot all about the time, as each in turn related their different views of the whole affair, and incidents that had occurred between them, which had been so ridiculously misunderstood.

It was sometime before they quieted down; then they became very serious, as grave in fact, as they had been gay, and sat in silence, gazing together down the winding creek.

And after all, she has never known of my love, thought Whitfield. Oh, if I had only written again, as I had so often desired.

A sweet, dreamy stillness prevailed as the sun slowly lowered in the west, leaving behind it shades of red and amber, which shed a glow over the woodland scene. Now and then a bird whisked over their heads with a little chirp, as it sought its nest for

the night; but the two on the bench never heeded the warning that night was near at hand. They still sat as though chained to the spot.

"Evelyn," said Whitfield, finally, the first to break the silence, "are you glad to know that I am *not* engaged?"

Evelyn started. There was something in his voice, his manner, his look, that she could not mistake; it filled her with a rapture it was impossible to suppress, though she tried to appear outwardly calm. She made an effort to speak, but her voice failed her, and she bent her head to hide the blushes.

"Evelyn," he repeated, leaning toward her, and placing his hand over hers as it lay on the bench between them. "You are glad—I see it! I feel it! or you would speak."

She could feel his fingers trembling as they closed over hers, for he was still weak.

She made another effort, but again her voice failed her. She was thrilling with unexpressed love. The whole earth seemed suddenly to burst into song, and her heart to throb wildly in the excess of her joy.

"Evelyn!" he whispered, for the third time, his voice trembling with emotion. "Can it—can it possibly be true that you love me? And have loved me all this time?"

All the answer that Evelyn was able to make was a little nod of the head.

"Evelyn, you do, you do! I see it all now!" he cried, exultingly, his voice quavering with every

word, as he drew her toward him, and lifting her face to his, kissed her.

In her confusion and joy, Evelyn still remained silent and tried to turn her face away.

"In that letter you never received, Evelyn, I told you of my love, and asked you to be my wife," he continued, when he was able to find his voice again.

A silence followed this, that seemed too sacred, too deeply overwhelming, to break with words.

The rays of the departing sun gradually faded into softer hues, deepening the shadows about them; but in that moment of bliss they were oblivious to both place and time; and when Evelyn finally gained sufficient courage to lift her face to his again, she saw that his eyes were moist with tears.

"You do not know how lonely I have been for a year, Evelyn," said he. "Time and again I longed to write to you, but rumors reached me from so many sources about you and John Burney, I could not help but believe that there was some truth in them, and thought, if my letter had gone astray, it was a lucky thing under the circumstances. But even before that letter was written, you had already influenced and colored all my thoughts. My love for you has been conceived during the struggle and triumph of the soul's mastery over self. It is a love of which I never dreamed of being able to attain, and it is one I know I could never experience again."

"Strange, but I have always felt a peculiar con-

geniality of soul between us," said Evelyn, finding her voice at last.

"And I," returned he. "Ever since my health began to fail, Evelyn, I have taken a new view of life; but on a closer acquaintance with you my soul awakened to a higher conception of life, and its real purpose.

He drew her close to him again, and touched her forehead reverently with his lips. For some time they again sat silent, blissful, in the great yearning of the soul of each for the other, gazing out over the peaceful scene before them. All the happenings of the past year filled their thoughts for a time, each being conscious of the spiritual relation that had steadily grown up between them, even though they had been so long separated, and with no hope of ever being united. And yet, each realized that the struggle they had gone through had, after all, been for self-betterment, giving a greater strength to their religion, a deeper meaning to their love, a better equipment with which to face the future, with its new experiences, its trials, its joys, and its sorrows. Henceforth it would be together that they would continue their climb to perfection, together they would labor to help others to seek what they had discovered to be the only goal worth striving for—the building of character to please the Most High.

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